CHAPTER 1

INT. PLANE WRECKAGE - DAY

SOUND of groaning metal, crackling fire, distant screams

SMOKE chokes the air, thick and acrid. Twisted metal ribs of an airplane fuselage jut from the earth like broken bones. Seats, luggage, and unidentifiable debris litter the ground, some smoldering, some aflame. The air hums with the recent violence, a metallic taste clinging to the tongue.

KANKRI VANTAS, a lanky figure in a blood-stained red sweater, stirs amidst the wreckage. His glasses are askew, a thin trickle of blood tracing a path from his temple, but his eyes, wide with a frantic energy, scan the chaos. He pushes himself up, a sharp pain lancing through his side.

KANKRI

Oh, for the love of the ancestral mothers, this is... this is an utterly unacceptable situation! The structural integrity of this aircraft was clearly compromised, not to mention the blatant disregard for passenger safety protocols!

He stumbles over a detached seat, nearly falling. His voice, though laced with a characteristic pedantry, trembles with a raw fear he struggles to mask. He spots a familiar, gangly form lying motionless a few feet away.

KANKRI

Gamzee! Oh, Gamzee, you insufferable, high-blood imbecile, are you even conscious?

He scrambles towards GAMZEE MAKARA, a much taller, lankier figure in purple and black, sprawled face down amidst a pile of shredded magazines.

Gamzee's vibrant purple hair is even more dishevelled than usual, a faint, sickly green sheen to his grey skin.

Kankri nudges Gamzee with his foot. Gamzee groans, a low, rumbling sound.

GAMZEE

Mmmph... motherfuckin'... nap time... already?

Gamzee slowly pushes himself up, his movements fluid, almost unnervingly graceful despite the recent trauma. He blinks, his yellow eyes unfocused, then slowly takes in the devastation around them. A small, unsettling smile stretches his lips.

GAMZEE

Whoa. This ain't no layover, motherfucker. Looks like we took the express train to the big sleep, huh? Or maybe... maybe it's a party. A real righteous, juggalo-style party.

Kankri winces, rubbing his temples.

KANKRI

A party? Gamzee, we have just survived a catastrophic aviation incident! People are… there are casualties. This is not a social gathering! This is a dire, potentially life-threatening predicament requiring immediate, rational assessment!

GAMZEE

Chill, bro. No need to get all honked off. Just sayin', if this is the afterlife, it's got some real gnarly decor. Lots of red. Real fitting, you know?

Gamzee gestures vaguely at the blood-splattered landscape, his smile widening. Kankri shudders.

Suddenly, a high-pitched, almost childlike yell cuts through the air.

FINN (O.S.)

Algebraic!

Kankri and Gamzee turn.

A young boy, FINN, clad in a blue shirt, denim shorts, and a distinctive white bear hat, struggles to free himself from a tangle of seatbelts. He's got a determined, slightly wild look in his bright blue eyes. He yanks at the buckle, muttering to himself.

FINN

Stupid buckle! You won't hold me! I'm a hero! Heroes don't get stuck in seatbelts!

He finally rips free, tumbling onto the floor. He scrambles to his feet, pulling a small, battered backpack onto his shoulders. He looks around, his gaze sharp, assessing. His eyes land on Kankri and Gamzee.

FINN

Whoa! Did we crash? Is this a new level? Are you guys, like, NPCs or something? My name's Finn! And I'm a hero!

Kankri stares at Finn, bewildered.

KANKRI

NPCs? My dear boy, I assure you, I am a sentient, complex individual, not a non-player character in some crude digital construct! This is reality, and it is most emphatically not a game!

FINN

Huh. You talk funny. Like an old-timey scroll. But you look kinda like a troll! Are you a troll? Like, a nice troll? Or a monster troll?

Gamzee chuckles, a low, guttural sound.

GAMZEE

He's a troll alright, little man. A real whiny, motherfucking troll. But he ain't gonna eat ya. Probably just lecture you to death.

KANKRI

Gamzee! That is an unhelpful and frankly inaccurate characterization! And you, young man, should not be making such assumptions based on... on our appearance! This is speciesist profiling!

Finn’s eyes dart between Kankri and Gamzee, a flicker of understanding in them.

FINN

Oh! So you ARE trolls! Cool! I've fought lots of trolls! Are there any bad guys around? Like, evil wizards or ice kings? 'Cause I'm ready!

He strikes a heroic pose, pulling a small, dull plastic sword from his backpack. Kankri sighs, a long, suffering sound.

Just then, a voice, calm and utterly out of place amidst the chaos, drifts from deeper within the wreckage.

THE DOCTOR (O.S.)

Fascinating. Utterly, utterly fascinating.

They all turn.

THE DOCTOR, a lanky man with wild brown hair and a tweed jacket, emerges from behind a crumpled wing. His bow tie is slightly askew, but he seems entirely unfazed by the devastation. He holds a SONIC SCREWDRIVER, its blue tip glowing faintly, as he taps it against a charred piece of fuselage.

THE DOCTOR

Remarkable. The sheer kinetic energy involved, the metallurgical fatigue, the rapid decompression... a truly spectacular display of physics in action. Shame about the plane, though. Always liked the aerodynamics of a good 747. Even if this one was clearly a prototype, or perhaps a repurposed cargo hauler. Bits and bobs don't quite match.

He looks up, his bright, intelligent eyes sweeping over the group, a wide, curious smile on his face.

THE DOCTOR

Ah! Survivors! Excellent! Good show, all of you. Bit of a bumpy landing, wouldn't you say? Nothing a good cup of tea and a spot of deductive reasoning can't fix, though. Probably.

Kankri stares, mouth agape.

KANKRI

A bumpy landing? Sir, this was a cataclysmic impact! And who are you? And what, precisely, is that peculiar glowing implement you are brandishing?

The Doctor beams, adjusting his bow tie.

THE DOCTOR

The Doctor. Just... The Doctor. And this, my dear fellow, is a sonic screwdriver. Very handy for opening things, closing things, detecting things, and generally making a nuisance of itself when I'm trying to be subtle. Which, let's be honest, is almost never.

He winks. Finn's eyes widen, a spark of awe in them.

FINN

Whoa! A sonic screwdriver! Is it magic? Can it zap monsters?

THE DOCTOR

Magic? No, no, no, young man. Science. Advanced science, yes, but science nonetheless. And zapping monsters? Well, it depends on the monster, doesn't it? Some monsters respond better to a good talking-to. Or a really, really loud noise.

Gamzee claps his hands together, a sudden, booming sound.

GAMZEE

See! I told you it was a party, bro! We got freaks, we got tech, we got... uh... whatever Kankri is! This is going to be righteous!

Kankri throws his hands up in exasperation.

KANKRI

Righteous? Gamzee, for the love of... This is not a recreational outing! We are stranded! We have no idea where we are, what dangers lurk, or how to effectuate a rescue! This demands a methodical, systematic approach, not this... this haphazard optimism!

The Doctor's smile softens, a glint of serious thought entering his eyes. He scans the dense, untouched forest that surrounds the crash site. The trees are colossal, ancient, their canopies forming a dark, unbroken ceiling. A strange, primal quiet hangs beneath the distant crackling of the plane.

THE DOCTOR

He's not entirely wrong, you know. He's got a point. A very good point, in fact. We are, to put it mildly, in a pickle. And I have a distinct feeling this isn't just any pickle. This feels like... a particularly gherkin-y pickle. With teeth.

He taps his chin, his gaze sweeping the forest line, his sonic screwdriver still glowing softly.

THE DOCTOR

No obvious signs of civilization. No radio signals. The air... it's clean, but there's a certain... density to it. A feeling. Like something is watching.

Finn clutches his plastic sword a little tighter.

FINN

Watching? You mean like, bad guys? I can take 'em! I've fought goblins, ogres, even a Litch!

KANKRI

Goblins and Liches? What in the name of... Are you suggesting this is some sort of fantasy realm? That is an utterly preposterous hypothesis! We are on Earth, or at least a planet resembling it, given the atmospheric composition and gravitational pull!

THE DOCTOR

Ah, but Earth is a big place, Kankri. And some parts of it are... well, they're not quite as well-documented as others. And sometimes, even if it is Earth, it's not *your* Earth. Or *my* Earth. Or even *Finn's* Earth, bless his adventurous little heart. Multiverses, you see. Bit complicated. We'll get to it. For now, let's assume we're on a very, very remote island. And remote islands, my friends, often have secrets. And teeth.

Gamzee grins, running a hand through his purple hair.

GAMZEE

Teeth, huh? That sounds like a good time! Like a real honkin' good time!

Kankri closes his eyes, pinching the bridge of his nose.

KANKRI

Oh, for the love of... This is going to be a protracted and utterly exhausting experience, isn't it?

Suddenly, a low, guttural GROWL echoes from the dense undergrowth. It's deep, animalistic, and utterly chilling. The sound seems to vibrate in their chests.

Finn’s bravado falters, his grip on the plastic sword tightening until his knuckles whiten. Gamzee’s smile wavers, a flicker of something darker crossing his face. Kankri’s eyes snap open, wide with a fresh surge of alarm. The Doctor’s expression becomes serious, his sonic screwdriver now pointing towards the sound, its hum intensifying.

THE DOCTOR

Right. Less talking, more listening. Everyone, stay close. And try not to make any sudden, loud noises. Unless it's absolutely necessary. Then, by all means, make a glorious racket.

Another GROWL, closer this time. A twig SNAPS.

The Doctor takes a step back, pulling Finn instinctively closer to him. Kankri, despite his fear, tries to maintain a semblance of control, his eyes darting wildly. Gamzee, however, begins to sway slightly, a low, unnerving CHUCKLE bubbling up from his throat.

GAMZEE

Oh, my, my, my. Looks like the party's just gettin' started, ain't it? Looks like the guests are comin' to say hello. Real friendly-like.

His eyes, usually wide and somewhat vacant, narrow into sharp, predatory slits. The green sheen on his skin seems to deepen. Kankri notices this, a fresh wave of concern washing over him.

KANKRI

Gamzee, I must implore you, do not engage in any rash or provocative behaviors! We do not know what that... that entity is! We must prioritize caution and strategic retreat, not... not whatever that unsettling expression signifies!

GAMZEE

Chill, bro. Just feelin' the vibe. The good, good vibe. The kind that makes ya wanna... dance.

He starts to hum, a low, discordant tune, his body swaying in a slow, almost hypnotic rhythm.

The Doctor ignores Gamzee for a moment, his full attention on the forest. He sweeps the sonic screwdriver along the tree line. The device beeps rapidly, a series of complex readings flickering on its small display.

THE DOCTOR

Fascinating. Organic signatures. Multiple. And... not entirely human. Or at least, not the kind of human I'm accustomed to. Elevated aggression markers. And a remarkable lack of inhibitions. This isn't just an animal, it's... something else. Something intelligent. And hungry.

A figure emerges from the trees.

It’s a MAN, naked, his skin pale and stretched taut over an emaciated frame. His limbs are long, disproportionately so, and he moves with a jerky, unnatural gait. His eyes are wide, black, and utterly devoid of humanity. His mouth hangs slightly open, revealing jagged, uneven teeth. He carries a crude club, fashioned from a tree branch, stained dark.

He stops at the edge of the clearing, sniffing the air, his head cocked to one side. He looks at them, not with curiosity, but with a chilling, calculating hunger.

Finn gasps, stepping behind the Doctor.

FINN

Whoa! What is that thing?! It's like a zombie, but... skinnier! And creepier!

KANKRI

A... a cannibal? Oh, this is beyond the pale! This is a gross violation of every conceivable societal norm and ethical boundary! This is... abhorrent!

Gamzee, however, lets out a low, drawn-out WHISTLE.

GAMZEE

Well, lookie here. The welcoming committee. And they brought snacks. Or maybe... maybe *we're* the snacks. Heh heh.

The cannibal takes a shuffling step forward. Then another. He’s not running, not charging, but slowly, inexorably, closing the distance.

THE DOCTOR

Right. Plan B, then. Or is it Plan C? I always get those mixed up. Never mind. The point is, we need to move. Now. And preferably, not towards the creature with the pointy stick and questionable dental hygiene.

He grabs Finn’s hand, his eyes scanning the wreckage.

THE DOCTOR

We need shelter. Something defensible. And we need to find out what exactly we've stumbled into. This isn't just a plane crash anymore. This is... an introduction.

The cannibal suddenly lets out a high-pitched, piercing SCREECH, a sound that scrapes against the nerves. He raises his crude club.

THE DOCTOR

Run! Everyone, run!

He pulls Finn, darting towards a gap in the fuselage, deeper into the wreckage. Kankri, despite his terror, follows, his long legs churning. Gamzee, with a final, unsettling chuckle, brings up the rear, his movements still strangely fluid, almost as if he were enjoying the chase.

The cannibal screams again, joined by another, and then another. More figures, equally gaunt and terrifying, begin to emerge from the shadows of the forest. Their black eyes fix on the fleeing group, and they give chase, their movements faster now, their guttural cries filling the air.

The four strangers, linked by nothing but a shared disaster, plunge deeper into the unknown, the primal screams of their pursuers echoing behind them, a terrifying welcome to this new, brutal world.

FADE TO BLACK.

CHAPTER 2

INT. PLANE WRECKAGE / JUNGLE - DAY

SOUND of frantic running, heavy breathing, distant screeches

The Doctor, a whirlwind of tweed and wild hair, pulls Finn through a narrow gap in the twisted metal fuselage. Kankri, his face a mask of pale green terror, scrambles behind them, his long limbs awkward and ungainly. Gamzee follows, his peculiar sway somehow accelerating, almost gliding over the debris.

Behind them, the SCREECHES of the cannibals grow louder, closer. Their bare feet slap against the earth, a horrifying rhythm of pursuit.

THE DOCTOR

This way! The fuselage offers temporary cover! We need to put something solid between us and... them!

He ducks under a jagged wing remnant, pulling Finn low. Finn, surprisingly agile, weaves through the metallic obstacles, his small plastic sword still clutched tight.

FINN

They're fast! Faster than goblins! Are they like, super-goblins?

KANKRI

They are not goblins, Finn! They are clearly a variant of Homo sapiens, albeit one that has undergone severe cultural and physiological degradation! This is a stark reminder of the fragile veneer of civilization!

A cannibal, gaunt and furious, lunges from around a shattered engine. Its eyes, black pits, fix on Kankri. It swings its crude club.

Kankri yelps, stumbling backward. The club WHIZZES past his ear, close enough for him to feel the wind of its passage. He trips over a discarded oxygen mask, landing hard on his backside.

KANKRI

(Gasping)

My lumbar region! This is an intolerable assault!

Gamzee, who had been lingering, almost inviting the chase, suddenly moves. He doesn't run from the cannibal. He turns, a strange, feral grin splitting his face. He kicks out, not with the force of a fighter, but with a fluid, almost playful motion. His foot connects with the cannibal's chest.

The impact sends the emaciated figure reeling, its club clattering against the metal. It stumbles, letting out a frustrated snarl. Gamzee doesn't stop to fight. He merely uses the momentary distraction, a strange, almost contemptuous flick of his wrist, to propel himself past the stunned cannibal and follow the others.

GAMZEE

Heh. Play nice, motherfucker. We got places to be.

The Doctor, already ahead, glances back, a flicker of surprise crossing his face as he witnesses Gamzee's unorthodox maneuver.

THE DOCTOR

Right! Keep moving! We need to get out of this open wreckage! The forest, everyone! The forest offers concealment!

They burst from the plane's confines, plunging into the dense, green wall of the jungle. The air immediately grows heavier, humid, thick with the scent of damp earth, decaying leaves, and an unfamiliar, cloying sweetness. Sunlight struggles to penetrate the canopy, dappling the forest floor in shifting

patterns of light and shadow. Enormous ferns brush against their faces, their fronds slick with moisture.

Kankri gasps for breath, his heart pounding against his ribs.

KANKRI

This is... this is utterly disorienting! The lack of clear pathways, the oppressive foliage! My allergies are already acting up!

Finn, however, seems to thrive in the chaos. He ducks and weaves, his small frame agile, his eyes wide with a mix of fear and exhilaration.

FINN

Whoa! This is like a super-dungeon! But with real monsters!

THE DOCTOR

Monsters, yes. But they're not just mindless brutes, Finn. They're intelligent. They hunt. We need to be smarter. We need to think.

He pulls out his sonic screwdriver, sweeping it across the tangled undergrowth. The device hums, its light cutting through the gloom.

THE DOCTOR

Right. Dense vegetation. Good. Lots of places to hide. Lots of places for *them* to hide too, mind. We need elevation. Or at least, a defensible position.

He points towards a massive, ancient tree, its roots splayed out like buttresses, forming natural alcoves at its base.

THE DOCTOR

Up there! Or at least, around it!

They scramble towards the tree. Kankri stumbles again, catching himself on a thick vine. Gamzee, with unnerving grace, vaults over a fallen log that Kankri had to awkwardly circumnavigate.

They huddle behind the thick roots of the colossal tree. The air here is cooler, the sound of the cannibals' pursuit slightly muffled by the dense foliage.

KANKRI

(Whispering, hoarse)

Are they... are they still pursuing us? I detect no immediate auditory evidence of their proximity, but that does not preclude their continued presence!

Finn peeks around a root, his eyes scanning the shadows.

FINN

I don't see 'em. But I can hear... something. Like rustling. And breathing. Lots of breathing.

The Doctor presses his ear against the tree trunk, then pulls out his sonic screwdriver, pointing it upwards.

THE DOCTOR

They're still out there. Moving slowly now. They're tracking us. By scent, I'd wager. Or sound. Or something else entirely. This forest... it's alive. And it's not entirely on our side.

Gamzee leans back against the rough bark, a slow, unsettling grin spreading across his face. He closes his eyes, inhaling deeply.

GAMZEE

Mmm. Smells like fear. And fresh meat. My kind of air, motherfucker.

Kankri glares at him, his voice a strained whisper.

KANKRI

Gamzee, this is not the time for your morbid pronouncements! We are in a perilous situation! Your casual disregard for our collective safety is highly counterproductive!

GAMZEE

Relax, bro. We're all in this together, right? Like a big, happy, murderous family. Just gotta find our rhythm. Find their rhythm. And then... dance.

He opens his eyes, a glint of something dangerous in their yellow depths.

The Doctor ignores the exchange, his mind racing. He scans the ground, examining the disturbed earth.

THE DOCTOR

They're not just following us. They're circling. Trying to cut us off. They know this territory intimately. We're the outsiders. The prey.

He stands, peering through the leaves.

THE DOCTOR

We can't stay here. This is only a temporary reprieve. We need to move, but with a plan. We need to find water. And something to eat. And a more permanent shelter.

FINN

Water! I'm thirsty! I think I swallowed some smoke back there.

KANKRI

Indeed. Hydration is paramount. Dehydration can lead to cognitive impairment, which would be disastrous in our current predicament.

Gamzee shrugs.

GAMZEE

I'm good. Got my own special blend.

He taps his temple, a cryptic gesture. Kankri shudders.

THE DOCTOR

Alright. New objective. Find a water source. A stream, a river, anything. Water usually means life. And sometimes, it means a path.

He looks at each of them, his gaze firm.

THE DOCTOR

We stick together. No heroics, Finn, unless absolutely necessary. Kankri, try to keep the existential dread to a minimum. And Gamzee... try not to provoke them more than you absolutely have to.

Gamzee winks.

GAMZEE

No promises, doc. Some things just gotta be provoked. For the lulz.

They begin to move again, deeper into the jungle, trying to keep low, their senses heightened. Every rustle of leaves, every snap of a twig, sends a jolt of adrenaline through them. The air grows warmer, more oppressive.

After what feels like an eternity, but could only be minutes, the ground begins to slope downwards. A faint, gurgling sound reaches their ears.

FINN

Water! I hear it!

He starts to push forward, but the Doctor grabs his arm.

THE DOCTOR

Careful, Finn. If we can hear it, so can they. And they might be waiting.

They creep towards the sound, parting thick curtains of vines. The jungle opens slightly into a small clearing, dominated by a narrow, bubbling stream. The water is clear, rushing over smooth stones. On the opposite bank, a small, makeshift effigy of sticks and bones stands impaled in the earth.

KANKRI

(Whispering)

An effigy. A clear indicator of ritualistic practices. This suggests a complex, albeit barbaric, cultural structure. We must be exceedingly cautious.

Finn stares at the effigy, a shiver running down his spine.

FINN

That's creepy. Like, super creepy.

Gamzee, however, walks straight to the stream, kneels, and scoops up a handful of water. He drinks deeply, then splashes some on his face.

GAMZEE

Ahhh. That's the good stuff. Straight from the earth. Uncut, unadulterated, pure.

The Doctor watches him, a slight frown on his face.

THE DOCTOR

Gamzee, a little more caution, perhaps? We don't know if this water is safe. Or if this place is a... a territorial marker.

Gamzee shrugs, wiping his mouth.

GAMZEE

Eh. If it kills me, it kills me. Better than dying thirsty, right? Besides, I got a feeling about this water. It's got... good vibes.

Kankri, despite his reservations, looks at the clear water with longing. His throat feels like sandpaper.

KANKRI

I concur with the Doctor's assessment regarding potential contaminants. However, the risk of dehydration currently outweighs the theoretical risk of pathogens.

He cautiously kneels, cupping his hands, and takes a small sip. The water is cool, refreshing. He takes another, larger gulp.

Finn follows suit, drinking heartily.

As they drink, the silence of the jungle seems to deepen, broken only by the gurgle of the stream. A sense of unease settles over them.

THE DOCTOR

Right. Water sorted. For now. But we can't stay here. This place feels... observed.

He sweeps his sonic screwdriver around the clearing again. It emits a low, steady hum, but no alarm.

THE DOCTOR

No immediate threats detected. But that doesn't mean they're not there. Just means they're being very, very quiet.

Suddenly, a loud CRACK echoes from the trees upstream. A branch snaps, followed by a soft THUD.

Everyone freezes.

FINN

What was that?

KANKRI

It sounds like... a large object impacting the forest floor. Potentially, a falling tree. Or...

His voice trails off as a dark, hulking shape emerges from the dense foliage upstream, moving along the bank of the stream.

It is another cannibal, but this one is larger, more muscular, its skin a sickly grey, scarred and ancient. Its eyes glow with a dull, malevolent red. It carries not a crude club, but a heavy, bone-studded axe, its edge glinting wickedly even in the dim light. This one moves with a terrifying deliberation, its gaze sweeping the clearing.

THE DOCTOR

Oh, bother. That's not just any cannibal. That's a... a Big One. And he looks rather annoyed.

The Big One stops, its head cocked, sniffing the air. Its red eyes lock onto them. It lets out a low, guttural GROWL that makes the very ground vibrate.

GAMZEE

Well, lookie here. The big boss man. Came to say hi.

Gamzee's voice, though still casual, holds a new, almost eager edge.

KANKRI

Gamzee, I must reiterate, this is not a social call! This is a clear and present danger! That weapon appears to be capable of inflicting grievous bodily harm!

The Big One raises its axe slowly, deliberately. It takes a step. Another.

THE DOCTOR

Alright. Plan B. Or C. Still not sure. But it involves running. Everyone, scatter! But try to meet back at the plane wreckage! It's familiar territory!

Finn, surprisingly, doesn't hesitate. He bolts into the jungle, a small, blue blur. Kankri, with a desperate cry, follows, his long legs pumping.

Gamzee, however, stands his ground. He looks at the approaching Big One, a slow smile spreading across his face.

GAMZEE

Nah, doc. I think I'll stay. Got a feeling this one wants to dance.

THE DOCTOR

Gamzee, don't be an idiot! You can't fight that thing!

Gamzee ignores him. He spreads his arms wide, a bizarre, almost welcoming gesture.

GAMZEE

Come on, big fella. Let's see what you got.

The Big One roars, a sound of pure, unadulterated rage, and charges. Its axe arcs through the air, a terrifying blur.

The Doctor, seeing Gamzee's suicidal defiance, curses under his breath. He hesitates for a split second, then makes a decision. He can't leave Gamzee. He can't leave anyone.

THE DOCTOR

Gamzee, you absolute madman! Sonic!

He aims his sonic screwdriver at the Big One. The device emits a high-pitched, oscillating beam of sound. It doesn't physically harm the creature, but it disorients it, making it flinch, its charge falter for a moment.

Gamzee uses that split second. He doesn't attack. He ducks, rolling under the descending axe, a move of surprising agility. The axe slams into the earth where he stood moments before, sending dirt and debris flying.

Gamzee springs up, laughing, a low, guttural sound.

GAMZEE

Missed me! Try again, big boy!

The Big One bellows, enraged, and swings again. Gamzee dances away, his movements oddly graceful, almost taunting. He doesn't try to engage, just evade, drawing the creature's attention.

THE DOCTOR

(To himself)

He's drawing it away. He's sacrificing himself to give us time. The utterly infuriating, magnificent idiot!

The Doctor runs, following the path Kankri and Finn took, but his eyes keep darting back to Gamzee, who is now leading the enraged Big One deeper into the jungle, his laughter echoing through the trees.

The Doctor catches up to Finn and Kankri, who are huddled behind another massive tree.

FINN

Where's Gamzee? Is he okay?

KANKRI

He... he engaged the larger specimen. A tactical blunder of epic proportions! Though, I must admit, his evasive maneuvers were... surprisingly adept.

THE DOCTOR

He's buying us time. We need to use it. We need to find something. Anything. A weapon. A way out.

He scans the surroundings, his sonic screwdriver humming, his mind racing. The jungle is a labyrinth.

THE DOCTOR

The plane wreckage! That's our best bet for tools, for materials! We need to get back there. And then, we need to find a way to signal for help. Or build something defensible.

They move cautiously, trying to retrace their steps, the sounds of Gamzee's taunts and the Big One's roars slowly fading behind them. The Doctor leads, his eyes constantly sweeping, his ears straining for any sign of danger. Kankri, though still terrified, tries to focus on his surroundings, looking for any familiar landmarks. Finn, his small plastic sword held ready, moves with a newfound seriousness.

They emerge back into the chaotic landscape of the plane crash. The air still smells of burnt fuel and scorched metal. The wreckage, however, now seems less menacing, more like a potential resource.

THE DOCTOR

Alright. We don't have much time. Those cannibals will be back. Especially if Gamzee... if he doesn't make it. We need to scavenge. Quickly.

He starts rummaging through a pile of luggage. Kankri, overcoming his initial revulsion, begins to search too, his movements stiff but determined. Finn, surprisingly, is the most efficient, his small hands quickly sifting through the debris.

FINN

Look! Blankets! And clothes! And a flashlight!

He pulls out a surprisingly intact flashlight, its plastic body a little scuffed, but the lens clear. He clicks it. A weak beam of light flickers to life.

THE DOCTOR

Excellent, Finn! Light! And those blankets, Kankri, they'll be useful for warmth, or even camouflage. Anything else? A knife? A sharp object?

Kankri unearths a broken piece of metal, jagged and sharp, from the remains of a seat.

KANKRI

This could serve as a rudimentary cutting tool. Or, in a desperate scenario, a weapon. Though I find the prospect of engaging in hand-to-hand combat utterly abhorrent.

THE DOCTOR

Desperate scenarios, Kankri, are rapidly becoming our modus operandi.

The Doctor himself finds a small, sturdy toolbox, surprisingly intact. He pries it open. Inside, a wrench, a hammer, some wire, and a coil of rope.

THE DOCTOR

Splendid! Tools! And rope! This is precisely what we need!

He looks up, scanning the surrounding forest. The sun begins its slow descent, painting the sky in hues of orange and purple. Dusk approaches.

THE DOCTOR

Nightfall. That's when they'll be most active. We need a shelter. Something above ground.

He points to a cluster of three tall, relatively slender trees, their branches intertwining high above.

THE DOCTOR

Treehouse. Crude, but effective. We can use the rope, the metal, some of the plane's fabric. We need to work fast.

Kankri, despite his exhaustion, nods.

KANKRI

A sound strategy. Elevation minimizes the risk of ground-based assaults. However, the structural integrity of a rapidly constructed arboreal dwelling is a concern.

FINN

I can climb! I climb trees all the time!

THE DOCTOR

Good man, Finn! You're our scout. Kankri, you're on structural support and material gathering. And I'll... I'll supervise, and try to make sense of this chaos.

They begin to work, a desperate race against the fading light. Finn, nimble as a monkey, shimmies up one of the trees, the rope tied around his waist. The Doctor, using the sonic screwdriver to test the strength of branches and guide Finn, directs the placement of the rope. Kankri, surprisingly strong despite his lanky frame, begins to drag larger pieces of plane wreckage – flattened sheets of metal, torn seat cushions – towards the base of the trees.

The sun dips below the horizon, plunging the jungle into a deeper, more menacing twilight. The sounds of the forest intensify: the chirping of unseen insects, the rustling of leaves, and a distant, unsettling HOWL.

FINN

(From above)

It's getting dark! I can barely see!

THE DOCTOR

Keep going, Finn! Just a little more! We need a platform!

They manage to lash together a rudimentary platform between two sturdy branches, using the rope and some salvaged metal sheets. It's shaky, but it's off the ground.

KANKRI

This structure is... precarious. Its capacity to withstand significant external force is questionable.

THE DOCTOR

It's better than nothing, Kankri! It's a start! Now, up you go!

Using the rope and some lower branches, they all clamber onto the platform. It's cramped, barely enough room for the three of them to sit. The Doctor uses some of the salvaged fabric to create a crude, partial canopy overhead, offering a modicum of concealment.

The flashlight, held by Finn, casts a small, flickering circle of light.

They sit in silence for a moment, listening to the sounds of the night. The howls are closer now, more frequent. They sound less like animals, more like deranged human voices.

FINN

Do you think Gamzee's okay?

The question hangs in the air, heavy and unspoken. The Doctor looks away, his gaze fixed on the impenetrable darkness below.

THE DOCTOR

Gamzee is... resourceful. He's got a certain knack for survival. I wouldn't count him out just yet.

But his voice lacks conviction. Kankri pulls a blanket tighter around himself, shivering despite the humid air.

KANKRI

His actions, while seemingly reckless, did serve to distract the larger aggressor. A selfless, albeit highly illogical, act of self-sacrifice.

THE DOCTOR

Self-sacrifice. Yes. Or perhaps... a twisted sense of fun. With Gamzee, it's always hard to tell.

The night deepens. The jungle comes alive with unseen creatures. The howls of the cannibals grow closer, circling the plane wreckage, their movements unseen but felt. They can hear them, rustling in the undergrowth, their guttural calls echoing.

Suddenly, a series of rapid, rhythmic THUMPING sounds erupts from the forest floor, directly below their tree.

FINN

What's that?!

The Doctor peers down, using the faint light of the flashlight. Below, several cannibals have gathered. They're not trying to climb. They're banging their crude clubs against the base of their tree, a terrifying, percussive rhythm. Their black eyes, reflecting the dim moonlight, gaze up at them with chilling intensity.

KANKRI

They are attempting to dislodge us! This is a deliberate, coordinated effort!

THE DOCTOR

They're testing the tree. Testing our resolve. This is a siege, of sorts.

The rhythmic thumping continues, shaking the tree, making their precarious platform sway. Finn clutches the flashlight, his small hand trembling. Kankri looks utterly distraught, his face pale green in the dim light.

KANKRI

The structural integrity! It will not withstand this prolonged assault!

THE DOCTOR

No, it won't. But we have to make them think it will. We have to make them think we're not worth the effort.

He pulls out his sonic screwdriver. He aims it downwards, at the base of the tree. He adjusts a dial, and the device emits a low, throbbing hum, amplified and distorted, making the tree itself vibrate with an unnatural sound. It's a sound designed to confuse, to disorient.

The cannibals below pause, their thumping ceasing. They look at each other, their heads cocked. The sound seems to bother them, to grate on their primitive senses.

One of the cannibals lets out a frustrated cry, then turns and slinks back into the shadows. Another follows. Slowly, one by one, the thumping stops, and the figures melt back into the darkness.

Silence descends again, but it's a tense, fragile silence.

FINN

It worked! They left!

THE DOCTOR

For now. They'll be back. Or they'll try something else. They're persistent. And they don't like being thwarted.

He slumps back against the tree trunk, exhausted.

THE DOCTOR

We've survived the first day. That's something. But the night... the night is long.

Kankri pulls his knees to his chest, wrapping the blanket tighter.

KANKRI

I must confess, Doctor, my initial prognosis for our survival was exceedingly low. Your... unconventional methods, however, have proven surprisingly effective thus far.

THE DOCTOR

Unconventional is my middle name, Kankri. Well, not literally. It's actually a series of clicks and whistles, but that's a story for another time.

He sighs, looking out into the impenetrable darkness.

THE DOCTOR

Gamzee. I hope you're okay, you big, purple menace.

The hours crawl by. Every rustle, every distant howl, every snap of a twig below sends jolts of fear through them. Finn eventually drifts off to an uneasy sleep, his head resting on the Doctor's shoulder, the flashlight still clutched in his hand, its beam now faint. Kankri tries to maintain a vigilant watch, but his eyelids grow heavy, his thoughts a jumbled mess of survival protocols and existential dread.

The Doctor remains awake, his mind whirring, trying to piece together the puzzle of this island. The cannibals' intelligence, their organized hunting, the strange effigies, the sheer isolation. This isn't just a deserted island. This is a system. A brutal, ancient system.

Just before dawn, as the first hint of grey light touches the eastern sky, a new sound drifts through the jungle. Not a howl, not a growl. It's a low, discordant HUMMING. And then, a familiar, unsettling CHUCKLE.

Gamzee.

The sound is faint at first, then grows louder, approaching their treehouse.

The Doctor stiffens, his sonic screwdriver ready. Kankri sits bolt upright, startling Finn awake.

FINN

What is it? Are they back?

KANKRI

That sound... it is...

From the shadows below their tree, a figure emerges. It's Gamzee. He's covered in mud and grime, his clothes torn, a long, deep gash across his arm, but he's walking, swaying, and still humming his strange tune. In one hand, he carries the Big One's bone-studded axe, its blade still dark with something wet. He drops it at the base of the tree with a dull THUD.

GAMZEE

Well, lookie here. You guys made a little nest. Cozy.

He looks up at them, his yellow eyes glinting in the pre-dawn light. His grin is wider than ever, smeared with dirt and what looks like blood.

GAMZEE

Took a while to convince that motherfucker to go to sleep. But he's down for the count now. Permanently.

He gestures vaguely at the axe with his uninjured hand.

GAMZEE

And he left me a present. Thought you might like it, doc. For... science.

Kankri stares, utterly speechless, at the bloodied axe and Gamzee's casual demeanor. Finn, however, looks at Gamzee with a mixture of horror and awe.

FINN

You... you fought him? The Big One? And you... won?

Gamzee shrugs, a strange, almost innocent gesture despite the gore.

GAMZEE

He was a real honkin' party pooper. Had to show him who's boss. Now, are you gonna let me up, or am I gonna have to climb this motherfucker myself? My arm's kinda tweaked.

The Doctor, after a moment of stunned silence, manages a weak smile.

THE DOCTOR

Gamzee. You absolute, magnificent, terrifying lunatic. Get up here.

He helps Gamzee clamber onto the platform, Kankri instinctively recoiling from the sight of the blood. Gamzee sits down, leaning against the tree trunk, breathing heavily, but his grin never falters.

GAMZEE

Good fight. Real good fight. Lots of screaming. Lots of... squishing.

He closes his eyes, a look of profound satisfaction on his face.

GAMZEE

Now, if you'll excuse me, I think I earned myself a nap.

He drifts off to sleep almost immediately, a faint, contented snore rumbling in his chest.

Kankri stares at Gamzee, then at the axe below, then back at Gamzee. His face is a complex mixture of shock, disgust, and a grudging, deeply unsettling admiration.

KANKRI

He... he single-handedly neutralized a primary threat. Using brute force and an apparent lack of self-preservation. This... this completely upends my psychological profiles of his capabilities.

THE DOCTOR

Gamzee, Kankri, is full of surprises. Most of them terrifying. But sometimes, very, very useful.

He looks at the rising sun, then at the sleeping Gamzee, then at the axe. A new, grim determination settles on his face.

THE DOCTOR

Alright. We have a weapon. We have a temporary shelter. And we have a very, very dangerous, very, very effective, if completely unhinged, ally. Day two. Let's see what else this island has in store for us.

He pulls out his sonic screwdriver, tapping it thoughtfully against his chin, his gaze fixed on the dense, mysterious jungle. The sounds of the forest, once terrifying, now seem to hold a new promise. A promise of answers, perhaps. Or just more danger.

FADE OUT.

CHAPTER 3

INT. TREEHOUSE SHELTER - DAY

SOUND of jungle birds, distant buzz of insects

Sunlight, dappled and fragmented, filters through the dense canopy, painting shifting patterns on the crude platform. The air is warm, heavy with humidity and the earthy scent of the jungle.

GAMZEE MAKARA lies sprawled, snoring softly, his face still caked with mud and streaks of dried blood. The bone-studded axe, now cleaned of its most gruesome stains, rests propped against the tree trunk below, a grim trophy.

KANKRI VANTAS sits rigidly, huddled in his blanket, his eyes wide and unfocused. He stares at Gamzee, then at the axe, a tremor running through him. His usual pedantic demeanor has been replaced by a deep-seated unease.

FINN, his initial awe of Gamzee now mixed with a healthy dose of fear, is meticulously sharpening his plastic sword against a smooth stone, making a faint SCRAPING sound.

THE DOCTOR, ever restless, paces the small platform, his sonic screwdriver tracing invisible patterns in the air. He occasionally glances at Gamzee, a

complex expression on his face – a mix of concern, analytical curiosity, and a touch of something akin to awe.

KANKRI

(Whispering)

I am attempting to process the implications of Gamzee's... actions. The sheer, unadulterated brutality. The apparent lack of remorse. It contravenes every ethical framework I possess.

Finn looks up, his small face serious.

FINN

He fought a monster. Like a hero. But... he looked kinda like a monster too. When he was laughing.

The Doctor stops pacing, looking at Kankri and Finn.

THE DOCTOR

Gamzee is... complicated. He's not entirely stable. He has a darkness in him, a primal, violent streak. But he also just saved our lives. And he gave us a weapon.

He gestures towards the axe below.

KANKRI

A weapon forged in savagery. Does that not further complicate the moral calculus? To utilize the tools of our aggressors, does it not risk our own descent into their barbarism?

THE DOCTOR

Kankri, right now, barbarism might be what keeps us alive. We're not in a lecture hall. We're in a jungle, surrounded by cannibals. We adapt. We survive. And sometimes, survival isn't pretty.

He kneels, examining a strange, almost luminescent fungus growing on the tree bark.

THE DOCTOR

Besides, this island. It's doing something to them. To the cannibals. To the environment. I suspect it's doing something to us too. This isn't just a simple case of tribal warfare. There's something deeper here. Something... influencing.

Gamzee stirs, letting out a loud groan. He slowly opens his yellow eyes, blinking against the light. He looks around, then his gaze settles on the axe below.

GAMZEE

Mmmph. Good morning, motherfuckers. Who's hungry?

Kankri flinches.

KANKRI

Gamzee, I must caution you against making light of our current, precarious situation. And your choice of nomenclature for our morning greetings is, as always, deeply problematic.

Gamzee stretches, a series of pops and cracks emanating from his joints. He winces, rubbing his injured arm.

GAMZEE

Chill, Kankri. Just tryin' to lighten the mood. And I'm hungry. Real hungry. All that... exercise... makes a fella famished.

FINN

We don't have any food. Only some old plane snacks. And they're probably all gone.

The Doctor stands, his expression thoughtful.

THE DOCTOR

Food. Yes. A critical component of continued biological function. We need to forage. But safely.

He turns to Gamzee.

THE DOCTOR

Gamzee, how's the arm? Can you move? Can you fight, if necessary?

Gamzee flexes his arm, his face momentarily contorting in pain.

GAMZEE

It's a little honked up. But I can move. And I can still swing a mean... whatever. My body's a temple, you know? A temple of pain and righteous fury.

He winks. Kankri sighs, rubbing his temples.

THE DOCTOR

Right. Finn, Kankri, we'll go for food. Gamzee, you'll stay here. Rest. Keep watch. And if anyone or anything approaches, you make a lot of noise. Or use the axe. Preferably the noise first.

Gamzee grins, a flash of white teeth.

GAMZEE

You got it, doc. Your wish is my command. Just bring back some grub. Something... meaty.

Kankri looks at Gamzee, then at the Doctor.

KANKRI

Are you certain it is prudent to leave Gamzee, in his current... heightened state, unsupervised with a lethal weapon?

THE DOCTOR

We need him to recover, Kankri. And he's our best deterrent right now. Besides, I think he knows the boundaries. Mostly. Don't you, Gamzee?

Gamzee just hums, picking at a loose thread on his torn sleeve.

The Doctor descends from the treehouse, followed by a hesitant Kankri and a more eager Finn. They move slowly, cautiously, into the jungle. The morning air is thick and humid, already promising a sweltering day.

THE DOCTOR

We're looking for berries, fruits, edible plants. Nothing too exotic, nothing that looks too brightly colored or shiny. Rule of thumb: if it looks like it's trying to warn you off, it probably is.

Kankri, despite his apprehension, begins to point out potential flora.

KANKRI

The 'Monstera deliciosa' is often found in tropical climates, its fruit, when ripe, is purportedly edible, though it requires careful preparation to avoid oxalate crystals. And these 'Musa acuminata' specimens, wild bananas, are also a possibility.

FINN

Whoa, you know a lot about plants, Kankri! Are you, like, a plant wizard?

KANKRI

I possess a rudimentary understanding of xenobotany, yes. It is a necessary component of interspecies diplomacy and ecological preservation. Not 'wizardry,' Finn. Simply applied knowledge.

They spend the next hour foraging, moving deeper into the jungle, always keeping the plane wreckage as a mental landmark. The Doctor uses his sonic screwdriver to scan plants, confirming edibility, or detecting toxins. Finn, with his keen eyesight, spots various berries and fruits. Kankri, surprisingly, identifies several edible tubers, carefully digging them up with a broken piece of plane metal.

They manage to gather a small, but promising, collection of food: wild bananas, some reddish berries, and a few starchy roots.

THE DOCTOR

Excellent! This should keep us going for a day or two. Now, back to base.

As they turn to head back, a faint, rhythmic DRUMMING sound drifts through the jungle. It's low, tribal, and deeply unsettling.

FINN

What's that? It sounds like... a party. But a scary party.

KANKRI

It is a percussive rhythm. A signal, perhaps. Or a ritual. It suggests organized activity.

The Doctor's face tightens. He pulls out his sonic screwdriver, scanning the air.

THE DOCTOR

It's coming from deeper in the jungle. Not near the crash site. That's good. But it means they're active. And they're communicating.

He points towards a faint, almost invisible trail leading off into the dense undergrowth.

THE DOCTOR

This way. A detour. We need to know what they're doing. And where.

Kankri hesitates.

KANKRI

Doctor, is it truly advisable to actively seek out our aggressors? Our primary objective should be survival, not reconnaissance.

THE DOCTOR

Knowledge is survival, Kankri. The more we know about them, the better we can predict their movements, understand their patterns. This island is a mystery, and mysteries need solving. Especially when they're trying to eat you.

Finn, despite his earlier fear, nods eagerly.

FINN

Yeah! We gotta find out what's going on! Like a real adventure!

They follow the faint trail, moving silently, their senses on high alert. The drumming grows louder, more insistent, accompanied now by low, guttural CHANTING. The air becomes heavy with a strange, smoky smell, like burning wood and something else, something acrid and metallic.

They reach the edge of a large, circular clearing. The sight that greets them is horrifying.

A crude village stands in the center, a collection of ramshackle huts made of branches, leaves, and what looks like human bones. In the middle of the clearing, a large bonfire crackles, sending plumes of thick, black smoke into the sky. Around the fire, dozens of cannibals, of various sizes and deformities, dance and chant, their bodies painted with red ochre and white clay.

But it's not just the cannibals. Impaled on tall stakes around the perimeter of the clearing are the severed heads of the plane's other passengers, their

faces frozen in silent screams. And tied to a larger, central stake, his eyes wide with terror, is the plane's co-pilot, still alive, his body already partially butchered.

The cannibals are performing a ritual. A grotesque, horrifying feast.

Finn lets out a small, strangled whimper, clamping a hand over his mouth. Kankri turns away, his body wracked with silent retching, though nothing comes up. The smell of blood, smoke, and charred flesh is overwhelming.

The Doctor's face is grim, his eyes narrowed. He watches the scene with a cold, analytical intensity, but a deep sadness flickers in their depths.

THE DOCTOR

Oh, you poor things. This is... beyond barbaric. This is a perversion.

KANKRI

(Voice trembling)

This is... an atrocity. An affront to all sentient life. We cannot simply... observe this! We must intervene!

FINN

We gotta help him! We gotta save the co-pilot!

The Doctor places a firm hand on Finn’s shoulder, his voice low and serious.

THE DOCTOR

Finn, Kankri, look at me. We can't. Not now. There are too many of them. We'd be walking into a slaughter. And then no one would be saved.

KANKRI

But... to stand by and allow such an egregious act of violence to transpire? My moral compass is in complete disarray!

THE DOCTOR

Sometimes, Kankri, the hardest thing to do is to do nothing. But we won't forget this. We will remember. And we will find a way to stop them. Not just for him, but for everyone else. This isn't just about survival anymore. It's about putting an end to this.

He pulls them back, away from the edge of the clearing, deeper into the concealing foliage. The screams of the co-pilot, brief and agonizing, pierce the air, followed by a roar of triumph from the cannibals.

Finn is openly weeping now, his small body shaking. Kankri covers his face with his hands, his shoulders heaving.

The Doctor holds them both, his own face etched with a profound sorrow.

THE DOCTOR

I'm so sorry, Finn. Kankri. I truly am. But we have to be smart. We have to be patient. We have to survive, so we can fight another day.

They retreat, leaving the horrific scene behind, the sounds of the cannibal feast echoing in their ears. The journey back to the treehouse is silent, heavy with the weight of what they witnessed. The collected food, once a symbol of hope, now feels insignificant, tainted.

They reach the treehouse, climbing up in silence. Gamzee is still asleep, oblivious to the horrors they've seen.

The Doctor sits down, his back against the tree trunk, and closes his eyes, his sonic screwdriver held loosely in his hand.

THE DOCTOR

This island... it's not just a place. It's a system. They're not just savages. They're part of something. Something ancient. Something... hungry. And it controls them. Drives them.

Kankri, his voice still hoarse, looks at the Doctor.

KANKRI

What do you mean, 'controls them'? Are you suggesting some form of psychic manipulation? Or a biological imperative?

THE DOCTOR

I don't know yet. But those effigies, the organized hunting, the ritualistic consumption... it's more than just primal instinct. It's directed. And that Big One Gamzee fought... he was different. More deliberate. More... evolved.

Finn, still shaken, looks up.

FINN

So, they're not just dumb monsters? They're like, smart monsters?

THE DOCTOR

Smart enough to survive. Smart enough to adapt. And perhaps, smart enough to be a symptom of something far, far worse.

He opens his eyes, a glint of steel in them.

THE DOCTOR

We need to understand this island. Its history. Its secrets. We need to find the source of this... this malevolence. And then, we need to stop it.

Gamzee stirs, letting out another loud snore. He slowly opens his eyes, blinking in the filtered light. He looks at their grim faces, then at the untouched food.

GAMZEE

Whoa. What happened? You guys look like you just saw a ghost. Or, like, a really sad clown.

Kankri glares at him, a flash of genuine anger in his eyes.

KANKRI

We witnessed an unspeakable act of barbarism, Gamzee! The systematic dismemberment and consumption of a fellow sentient being! It was a grotesque display of inhumanity!

Gamzee's grin falters slightly. He looks from Kankri to Finn, then to the Doctor. A flicker of something, perhaps understanding, perhaps something darker, crosses his face.

GAMZEE

Oh. Yeah. That. They do that sometimes. Makes 'em feel all warm and fuzzy inside. Or maybe just full.

FINN

How can you be so... so calm about it?

Gamzee shrugs, a strange, almost vacant look in his eyes.

GAMZEE

Seen worse, little man. Lot worse. The world's a messed up place. Always has been. Always will be. You just gotta find your jam in it. Find your own way to make sense of the mess.

He reaches for a banana, peeling it slowly.

GAMZEE

So. What's the plan, doc? We gonna sit here and starve, or we gonna go kick some more motherfuckin' ass?

The Doctor looks at Gamzee, a new thought dawning. Gamzee's apparent immunity to the psychological trauma, his familiarity with such horrors. It wasn't just a lack of empathy; it was a different kind of experience.

THE DOCTOR

We're going to build. And we're going to explore. We need a more permanent, defensible base. And we need to find clues. Anything that tells us what this island is. And what's really going on here.

He gestures towards the axe below.

THE DOCTOR

Gamzee, that axe. It's a good start. But we're going to need more. More tools. More defenses. And perhaps, a better understanding of their weaknesses.

Gamzee takes a bite of the banana, his eyes fixed on the jungle.

GAMZEE

Weaknesses, huh? I got a few ideas. These motherfuckers, they like their little rituals. Their little shiny things. Maybe we can mess with that. Make 'em dance to a different tune.

Kankri, still reeling from the events, looks at Gamzee with a mixture of fear and a grudging, desperate hope.

KANKRI

You... you have insights into their psychology? Their operational methodologies?

GAMZEE

You could say that. We're all just trying to get by, Kankri. Some of us just got... different ways of doing it. Different ways of seeing the world. And sometimes, the world... it likes to see back.

He finishes the banana, then looks at the Doctor.

GAMZEE

So, what's first, doc? We build a fort? Or we go hunting for more shiny things?

The Doctor stands, his mind already formulating a new strategy.

THE DOCTOR

First, we reinforce this platform. Make it truly defensible. Then, we gather more resources. And then... we start looking for answers. This island has a story. And I intend to read every terrifying page of it.

He pulls out a small notebook and a pen from an inner pocket of his tweed jacket, miraculously preserved. He begins to make notes, sketching designs, listing priorities. Kankri, seeing the Doctor's renewed focus, feels a small spark of his own analytical mind returning. Finn, though still upset, finds a measure of comfort in the Doctor's determination.

The sun climbs higher, beating down on the jungle. The sounds of the cannibal feast have faded, replaced by the relentless hum of insects and the calls of exotic birds. The horror of the morning still lingers, a dark shadow in their minds, but a new resolve begins to solidify. They are no longer just survivors. They are investigators. And perhaps, avengers.

FADE TO BLACK.

CHAPTER 4

INT. TREEHOUSE SHELTER / JUNGLE - DAY

SOUND of sawing, hammering, distant jungle noises

The treehouse platform, once precarious, now boasts an improved, if still crude, defenses. Scraps of plane metal, lashed with salvaged wires and

vines, form a waist-high barricade around the perimeter. A makeshift ladder, fashioned from a collapsed seat frame and rope, hangs precariously.

KANKRI, despite his initial aversion to manual labor, meticulously weaves long, thorny vines through the metal, creating a deterrent. His brow is furrowed in concentration, a rare sight.

FINN, agile and energetic, hauls up more metal sheets and fabric, his small muscles straining. He works with a quiet determination, the horror of the previous day still etched in his young face.

THE DOCTOR supervises, his sonic screwdriver humming as he tests the integrity of their construction. He moves with a focused intensity, his eyes constantly scanning the surrounding jungle.

GAMZEE, surprisingly, is the most effective. His strength, hidden beneath a languid demeanor, is immense. He easily lifts heavy sections of fuselage, positioning them with a casual grace. His injured arm, though still bandaged with strips of fabric, doesn't seem to hinder him much. He occasionally lets out a low, discordant hum as he works.

KANKRI

The tensile strength of these particular lianas is impressive. However, their long-term resistance to fungal decay and insect infestation remains an unknown variable. I hypothesize a need for regular inspection and reinforcement.

FINN

They're prickly! Good! No one's gonna want to climb through these!

THE DOCTOR

Excellent work, Kankri, Finn! Every bit helps. Gamzee, how's that last panel? Does it feel secure?

Gamzee grunts, giving a final shove to a large piece of aluminum. It settles into place with a satisfying CLUNK.

GAMZEE

Solid, doc. Like a motherfucker. Think it'll hold if they try to climb?

THE DOCTOR

It'll slow them down. Give us time. That's all we can hope for right now. Time to think. Time to plan.

He looks out at the dense jungle, his brow furrowed.

THE DOCTOR

We need more information. That village... it wasn't just a random encampment. It was a hub. A center of their activity. And that ritual... it wasn't just about food. It was about power. And something else. Something... cyclical.

KANKRI

The 'cyclical' aspect implies a recurring pattern. Perhaps seasonal, or lunar? Do their predatory behaviors align with any observable celestial phenomena?

THE DOCTOR

Precisely, Kankri! Good thinking. We need to observe their patterns. Their movements. Their vulnerabilities. And we need to find out what's driving them. Because I don't think it's simply hunger. Not anymore.

Gamzee, who had been quietly sharpening the Big One's axe with a piece of salvaged metal, looks up.

GAMZEE

You think there's something else pullin' their strings, doc? Like, a grand puppet master?

THE DOCTOR

It's a possibility. The level of organization, the sheer malevolence... it feels directed. Almost artificial. This island has a history. And I think that history is still very much alive.

He gestures towards the dense jungle.

THE DOCTOR

We need to venture out again. Not to their village, not yet. But to explore. To map. To find anything that can give us an edge. A clue. A weakness.

FINN

I'm ready! I can scout! I'm good at finding stuff!

KANKRI

I maintain my reservations regarding proactive engagement, Doctor. However, the acquisition of intelligence is undeniably crucial. I possess a superior capacity for observation and data retention.

Gamzee grins, hefting the axe.

GAMZEE

And I'm good at makin' sure nothing tries to eat us while you brainiacs are busy brainin'. Call me... the designated ass-kicker.

The Doctor nods, a small smile touching his lips.

THE DOCTOR

Alright. Finn, you'll be point. Your agility and keen eyes will be invaluable. Kankri, you're our botanist and cartographer. Keep track of our movements, note anything unusual. Gamzee, you're our muscle. And our deterrent. Keep us safe. And try not to initiate any unnecessary hostilities.

Gamzee shrugs.

GAMZEE

No promises, doc. Some hostilities just got a way of initiating themselves.

They descend from the treehouse, armed with their salvaged tools and a new sense of purpose. The sun is high, casting long, sharp shadows. The jungle seems to watch them, silent and brooding.

They move slowly, cautiously, deeper into the interior of the island, away from the crash site and the known cannibal village. The Doctor uses his sonic screwdriver to scan the environment, detecting subtle energy fluctuations, geological anomalies, anything out of the ordinary.

Kankri, with surprising diligence, sketches crude maps on salvaged paper, noting prominent trees, rock formations, and potential water sources. He

identifies several new species of flora, some with unsettling, almost predatory characteristics.

KANKRI

This particular vine, for instance, exhibits thigmonastic movements at an accelerated rate. Its tendrils coil with unusual speed upon contact. And this fungus... it emits a faint, almost imperceptible bioluminescence.

Finn, meanwhile, climbs trees, his eyes scanning the canopy, looking for any signs of movement, any trails, any indication of the cannibals' presence. He spots strange carvings on ancient trees, symbols he doesn't understand, but which make the hairs on his arms stand up.

FINN

Doctor! Look at this!

He points to a massive banyan tree, its aerial roots forming a tangled curtain. Carved into its bark, high up, is a grotesque, stylized face, its eyes wide and hollow, its mouth a gaping maw. Around it, smaller, more rudimentary symbols are etched.

The Doctor approaches, his sonic screwdriver humming as he scans the carving.

THE DOCTOR

Fascinating. Pre-date the plane crash, obviously. These are ancient. Tribal, yes, but with a sophistication that suggests a deeper meaning. A religious significance, perhaps. Or a warning.

KANKRI

The iconography bears a striking resemblance to certain archaic depictions of chthonic deities. The prominent eyes, the emphasis on the mouth... it implies a being associated with consumption, with the underworld.

Gamzee, who had been leaning against a tree, axe resting on his shoulder, steps forward, his gaze fixed on the carving. His casual demeanor drops, replaced by a strange, almost reverent stillness.

GAMZEE

That's the Mother. She watches. She waits. She feeds.

Kankri and Finn look at him, bewildered. The Doctor turns, his eyes sharp.

THE DOCTOR

Gamzee? What do you mean, 'the Mother'? Have you seen this before? Do you know something about this island?

Gamzee shrugs, his eyes still on the carving.

GAMZEE

Just a feeling, doc. A real honkin' strong feeling. This place... it's got a vibe. A real old, hungry vibe. Like something's been here for a long, long time. And it ain't happy.

He traces a finger along one of the smaller, more abstract symbols carved beneath the main face.

GAMZEE

These little squiggles. They're like... offerings. Like, 'here, eat this, leave us alone.' Or 'here, eat this, and make us strong.' Depends on the day, I guess.

KANKRI

You are interpreting these symbols? Gamzee, your previous statements implied no prior knowledge of indigenous semiotics!

GAMZEE

I just... get it, Kankri. Sometimes, you just gotta feel the language, you know? It's not all words. It's sounds. And smells. And... blood.

The Doctor studies Gamzee, a new line of inquiry forming in his mind. Gamzee's connection to this place, his strange intuition, his capacity for violence. Was it simply a personality quirk, or something more?

THE DOCTOR

Gamzee, tell me everything you 'feel' about this place. Anything. No matter how strange.

Gamzee closes his eyes, taking a deep breath of the humid air.

GAMZEE

It's... old. Real old. And it's alive. Not just the trees, not just the bugs. The dirt. The rocks. Everything. And it's always hungry. Always. The little men... they just do what it tells 'em. They're like... its hands. Its teeth.

FINN

The little men? You mean the cannibals? So, they're like puppets?

GAMZEE

Yeah. Puppets. Or maybe... really, really devoted followers. They think they're doing the right thing. Making the Mother happy. Keeping her fed.

KANKRI

This hypothesis suggests a form of symbiotic or parasitic relationship between the indigenous population and a larger, unseen entity. This is a significant development!

THE DOCTOR

A parasitic relationship. Or a mutually beneficial one, from their perspective. They feed it, and it... what? Protects them? Grants them power? Or simply ensures their continued existence in this brutal cycle?

He scans the carving again, then the ground around the tree. He notices a faint, almost imperceptible GLOW emanating from deep within the tree's roots.

THE DOCTOR

There's something here. Something generating energy. Deep inside the tree.

He kneels, pressing his sonic screwdriver against the glowing roots. The device emits a rapid series of beeps, its display flashing with complex readings.

THE DOCTOR

Genetic markers. Not terrestrial. Not entirely. And a resonance frequency... it's pulsing. Like a heartbeat. But not a biological one.

Suddenly, a low, guttural GROWL echoes from within the roots, directly beneath them. The ground trembles. The glowing intensifies, pulsing with a malevolent light.

FINN

What was that?!

KANKRI

It appears we have disturbed something! A localized, subterranean entity, I presume!

Gamzee, however, is already moving. He raises his axe, his eyes narrowed, fixed on the glowing roots.

GAMZEE

It's awake. You woke it up, doc.

The ground around the roots begins to CRACK. Fissures appear, glowing with the same eerie light. A thick, viscous, black liquid begins to seep from the cracks, bubbling and steaming. The air fills with a foul, metallic odor.

THE DOCTOR

Right. That's our cue to leave! Now!

They turn to run, but a new sound echoes through the jungle. A cacophony of SCREECHES and howls, closer this time, approaching rapidly from all directions. The cannibals.

KANKRI

We are surrounded! They were alerted by the disturbance!

GAMZEE

They're not just alerted, Kankri. They're excited. They like it when the Mother gets riled up. Makes 'em feel strong.

He grins, a feral, unsettling expression. He doesn't seem afraid, only exhilarated.

GAMZEE

Alright, motherfuckers! Who wants to dance?!

He lunges forward, axe held high, towards the approaching cannibals.

THE DOCTOR

Gamzee, no! Don't engage! We need to stick together!

But Gamzee is already a blur, a whirlwind of purple and grey, his axe whistling through the air. He meets the first wave of cannibals with a terrifying ferocity, his movements fluid and deadly. The sounds of impact, of bone and flesh, are sickening.

The Doctor curses, pulling Finn and Kankri back, away from the melee.

THE DOCTOR

Alright! New plan! We can't fight them all! We need to find cover! And we need to get away from whatever that thing is in the tree!

The black, viscous liquid from the tree's roots begins to spread, consuming the earth, killing the surrounding vegetation, turning the vibrant green jungle into a black, oozing wasteland. The air grows heavier, more oppressive.

KANKRI

The flora is undergoing rapid necrosis! This substance is highly corrosive!

They scramble through the jungle, dodging cannibals, the sounds of Gamzee's battle echoing behind them. Finn, surprisingly, is a natural at evasion, weaving through the dense undergrowth. Kankri, though still clumsy, pushes himself, driven by sheer terror.

They run until their lungs burn, until the sounds of the battle fade into the background. They find themselves in a small, rocky clearing, dominated by a sheer cliff face. A narrow cave opening, barely visible, is nestled at its base.

THE DOCTOR

In here! It's our only option!

They tumble into the cave, gasping for breath. The air inside is cool, damp, and smells faintly of ozone and something metallic. The cave walls are smooth, almost artificially so.

FINN

What is this place? It doesn't look natural.

The Doctor pulls out his sonic screwdriver, sweeping it across the cave walls. The device hums, its display flashing with an array of new, even more perplexing readings.

THE DOCTOR

You're right, Finn. It's not natural. Not entirely. This isn't just a cave. It's... a structure. Ancient. And engineered.

He points to strange, glowing glyphs etched into the cave walls, almost invisible until the sonic's light catches them. They pulse with a faint, internal light, mirroring the glow from the banyan tree.

KANKRI

Glyphs! An ancient writing system! This is truly remarkable! The stylistic characteristics suggest a pre-human civilization, or perhaps an extraterrestrial influence!

THE DOCTOR

Exactly, Kankri! This island... it's not just an island. It's a key. To something. And I think we just stumbled into the lock.

He walks deeper into the cave, his eyes fixed on the glowing glyphs. They seem to pulse with a low, rhythmic energy.

THE DOCTOR

These glyphs... they're not just writing. They're circuits. A power conduit. And they're leading somewhere.

He follows the glowing lines, deeper and deeper into the cave. Finn and Kankri follow, their apprehension warring with their curiosity.

The cave opens into a vast, cavernous chamber. In the center, a colossal, glowing crystal pulses with an intense, emerald light. It's enormous, easily fifty feet tall, and seems to be the source of the strange energy they've been

detecting. The walls of the chamber are covered in more glyphs, all pulsing in sync with the crystal.

FINN

Whoa! What is that thing?!

KANKRI

A naturally occurring geode of such immense proportions is highly improbable. This appears to be an artificially grown crystal, possibly for energy generation or storage.

The Doctor approaches the crystal, his sonic screwdriver held high. The device vibrates intensely, its readings going off the charts.

THE DOCTOR

It's more than just energy, Kankri. It's... consciousness. Or something very close to it. This crystal is the heart of the island. The 'Mother' Gamzee spoke of. And it's influencing everything. The plants, the animals, the cannibals... even the weather, I'd wager.

He touches the crystal with his hand, a jolt of pure energy passing through him. He recoils, shaking his hand, but a look of profound understanding dawns on his face.

THE DOCTOR

It's a life form. A colossal, crystalline, sentient entity. And it's dying. Or rather, it's being corrupted. That black ooze... it's a disease. A parasitic infection. And it's spreading.

KANKRI

A parasitic infection? But the cannibals... they appear to worship it. How can a diseased entity command such devotion?

THE DOCTOR

Perhaps it's not the entity itself they worship, Kankri. Perhaps it's the power it grants them. The strength, the resilience, the heightened senses. The infection, ironically, makes them stronger. More aggressive. More... useful to the parasite.

He points to a dark, pulsating vein running through the crystal, a tendril of the black ooze visible within its core.

THE DOCTOR

This is the true enemy. Not the cannibals. They're just a symptom. This parasitic entity... it's feeding on the Mother. And through her, it's corrupting the entire island.

Suddenly, a loud, triumphant ROAR echoes from the cave entrance. Gamzee.

He stumbles into the chamber, covered in more mud and blood, his axe still clutched in his hand. He's battered, bruised, but his eyes are alight with a manic energy. Behind him, a few straggling cannibals, their bodies torn and broken, lie motionless.

GAMZEE

Alright, motherfuckers! Who's next?! I'm just gettin' warmed up!

He stops, his gaze falling upon the colossal crystal. His eyes widen, and his manic grin slowly fades, replaced by a look of profound, almost childlike wonder.

GAMZEE

The Mother. She's... she's beautiful. Even when she's hurting.

He takes a step towards the crystal, his axe lowering.

THE DOCTOR

Gamzee, no! Don't touch it! It's corrupted!

But Gamzee ignores him. He walks up to the crystal, his hand reaching out, hesitantly, towards its glowing surface.

GAMZEE

She's crying. I can feel it. She wants... she wants it to stop.

He presses his hand against the crystal. The emerald light intensifies, pulsing wildly. The black vein within the crystal seems to recoil, shrinking slightly.

Gamzee lets out a low, mournful moan, his body trembling.

GAMZEE

It hurts. It hurts so much.

The Doctor watches, utterly fascinated. Gamzee, the unstable, violent troll, seems to be communicating with the sentient crystal.

KANKRI

He is establishing a direct neural link! This is unprecedented! His unique physiology must render him receptive to its resonant frequencies!

FINN

Is he gonna be okay?

Gamzee pulls his hand away, his face pale, but a new resolve in his eyes.

GAMZEE

She says... she says it's hungry. The thing inside her. It's always hungry. It wants to spread. To consume everything. But she's fighting it. She's tired.

He looks at the Doctor, his gaze intense.

GAMZEE

We gotta help her, doc. We gotta cut it out. Before it eats her whole. And then... it'll eat us. And everything else.

The Doctor nods slowly, his mind racing, connecting the dots. Gamzee's intuition, his connection to the island, his violent capabilities. It all makes a terrifying, yet strangely logical, sense.

THE DOCTOR

He's right. The parasite. We need to sever its connection to the Mother. But how? It's inside the crystal. It's energy. It's... life.

He looks at the glowing glyphs, then back at Gamzee, then at the axe still in Gamzee's hand.

THE DOCTOR

Gamzee. You have a weapon. And you have a connection. A way to feel the Mother. To feel the parasite. Kankri, Finn, we need to find a way to disrupt its energy. To weaken it.

KANKRI

If the glyphs are conduits, perhaps reconfiguring their energy flow? Or introducing a counter-frequency?

FINN

I can climb! I can get to those glyphs!

Gamzee, however, is already moving. He raises his axe, his eyes fixed on the black vein within the crystal.

GAMZEE

No need for fancy talk, doc. Sometimes, you just gotta hit the motherfucker where it hurts.

He brings the axe down with a furious, primal scream, aiming for the pulsating black vein within the crystal.

FADE TO BLACK.

CHAPTER 5

INT. CRYSTAL CAVERN - DAY

SOUND of splintering crystal, guttural roars, high-pitched shrieks

Gamzee's axe, a blur of bone and steel, smashes into the colossal emerald crystal. It doesn't shatter, but a deep, resonant CRACK echoes through the cavern. The black vein within the crystal, the parasitic entity, recoils with a piercing SHRIEK that grates on their very souls. The entire cavern shudders.

The emerald light of the Mother crystal flickers wildly, then intensifies, pushing back against the encroaching darkness.

GAMZEE

(Roaring)

Take that, motherfucker! You ain't gonna eat my Mother!

He pulls the axe free, a sliver of black, viscous liquid dripping from its blade. The black ooze on the cavern floor writhes, agitated.

KANKRI

Gamzee, exercise caution! Direct physical assault on a potentially sentient, energy-based entity could have unforeseen and catastrophic repercussions!

THE DOCTOR

He's right, Kankri! But it worked! It hurt it! Gamzee, again! Aim for the core of the infection!

Gamzee, his eyes alight with a furious resolve, doesn't hesitate. He swings again, a guttural yell tearing from his throat. The axe bites deeper this time, sending shards of emerald light scattering like glitter. The parasitic entity within the crystal lets out another ear-splitting SHRIEK, a sound of pure agony.

The cavern floor trembles violently. Dust and small rocks rain down from the ceiling. The black ooze on the ground begins to bubble and steam, forming grotesque, amorphous shapes that writhe and pulse.

FINN

Whoa! It's mad! It's super mad!

THE DOCTOR

It's fighting back! Kankri, Finn, we need to create a diversion! We need to disrupt its energy! The glyphs!

The Doctor points to the glowing glyphs on the cavern walls.

THE DOCTOR

Finn, climb! Find the central confluence of the glyphs! Kankri, use your knowledge! Find a way to create a counter-frequency! Something to jam its signal!

Finn, agile as ever, scrambles up the crystal-studded walls, his small hands finding purchase on the rough surfaces. He reaches a cluster of glyphs that pulse with an almost blinding intensity.

FINN

I'm here, Doctor! What do I do?!

THE DOCTOR

Touch them, Finn! Channel your energy! Focus! Imagine pushing against it!

Kankri, meanwhile, pulls out his salvaged notepad and pen, his mind racing. He stares at the glyphs, then at the Doctor's sonic screwdriver, then back at the glyphs.

KANKRI

The resonant frequency of the Mother is approximately 432 hertz, a harmonic of the natural Schumann resonance. The parasitic entity, however, exhibits a chaotic, dissonant frequency, likely designed to overwhelm and corrupt!

He fumbles with the sonic screwdriver, his hands trembling.

KANKRI

If I can recalibrate the sonic to emit a focused, inverse frequency... a sonic counter-pulse! It might disrupt its neural pathways!

The Doctor, his eyes fixed on Gamzee, who is now locked in a brutal, rhythmic assault on the crystal, nods frantically.

THE DOCTOR

Do it, Kankri! Anything! Everything!

Gamzee, a primal force unleashed, continues to hack at the crystal. Each blow sends a fresh wave of agony through the parasitic entity, making it shriek and writhe. The black ooze on the floor begins to solidify, forming sharp, obsidian-like spikes that lash out at Gamzee. He dodges them, his movements a blur of controlled chaos, his body now covered in fresh cuts and bruises, but his resolve unwavering.

GAMZEE

You ain't gonna win, motherfucker! This ain't your turf! This is the Mother's! And she's got a family!

Finn, high on the wall, presses his hands against the glowing glyphs. A surge of energy courses through him, making his hair stand on end. He pushes, focusing all his will, and the glyphs flicker, then pulse with a new, chaotic energy, disrupting the parasitic entity's control.

Kankri, with a burst of desperate inspiration, adjusts the sonic screwdriver. He aims it at the crystal, and the device emits a high-pitched, oscillating WAIL, a sound designed to tear at the very fabric of the parasite's consciousness.

The combination of Gamzee's physical assault, Finn's energy disruption, and Kankri's sonic counter-pulse hits the parasitic entity like a hammer. It lets out a final, ear-splitting SCREAM, a sound of pure, unadulterated rage and agony. The black vein within the crystal shrivels, retracting into nothingness. The black ooze on the floor dissolves into smoke, leaving behind only sterile, cracked earth.

The emerald light of the Mother crystal stabilizes, glowing with a soft, steady brilliance. The cavern stops trembling. A profound, almost sacred, silence descends.

Gamzee collapses, his axe clattering to the ground. He's breathing heavily, his body spent, but a look of profound peace settles on his face.

Finn, high on the wall, slides down, exhausted but triumphant. Kankri, the sonic screwdriver still humming in his hand, stares at the now-pure crystal, his mouth agape.

The Doctor approaches Gamzee, kneeling beside him.

THE DOCTOR

Gamzee. You did it. You actually did it.

Gamzee looks up, a weak but genuine smile on his lips.

GAMZEE

She's... she's okay now, doc. She told me. Said... said thank you.

He closes his eyes, drifting into a deep, well-deserved sleep.

Kankri, his voice trembling with awe, approaches the crystal.

KANKRI

The energy fluctuations have normalized. The dissonant frequencies are gone. It is... pure.

The Doctor stands, his gaze sweeping the cavern, then the entrance.

THE DOCTOR

But what about the cannibals? If the parasite was controlling them...

As if on cue, a low, mournful WAIL echoes from the cave entrance. Then another. And another. A chorus of despair.

They rush to the entrance, peering out. The jungle, once a cacophony of life, is now eerily silent. The cannibals, those who survived Gamzee's rampage, are sprawled on the ground, twitching, convulsing. The red and white paint

on their bodies seems to bleed into their skin, fading, leaving behind pale, emaciated forms. Their black eyes, once filled with hunger, are now vacant, lost.

FINN

What's happening to them?

THE DOCTOR

The parasite's influence is gone. It was their lifeblood, their purpose. Without it, they're... reverting. Back to what they were before. Or perhaps, what they never were. Lost souls, adrift.

Kankri observes them, a profound sadness in his eyes.

KANKRI

They are suffering from a systemic withdrawal. The neural pathways, once controlled by the parasitic entity, are collapsing. They are experiencing a profound existential crisis. And physical pain.

One of the cannibals, a large male, struggles to his feet, his body shaking. He looks at his hands, then at the others, then at the towering trees, confusion and terror etched on his face. He lets out a guttural cry, not of aggression, but of profound grief.

THE DOCTOR

They're not monsters anymore, Finn. They're just... people. Trapped. And lost.

He turns back to the cavern, to the now-serene Mother crystal.

THE DOCTOR

We've saved the Mother. We've stopped the parasite. But we haven't saved them. Not yet.

He looks at Kankri.

THE DOCTOR

Kankri, can you stabilize them? Can you find a way to mitigate the trauma? To help them recover?

Kankri, surprisingly, doesn't hesitate. He pulls out his notepad, his mind already whirring.

KANKRI

The immediate priority is physiological stabilization. Rehydration, nutrient provision, and pain management. Psychologically, their previous conditioning will need to be systematically deconstructed, replaced with a more adaptive framework. It will be a protracted and ethically complex undertaking. But, yes. It is theoretically possible.

FINN

So, we're gonna help them? Even after they tried to eat us?

The Doctor smiles, a weary but hopeful expression.

THE DOCTOR

That's what we do, Finn. We help. Even when it's hard. Especially when it's hard.

He looks back at the now-peaceful jungle, then at the sleeping Gamzee.

THE DOCTOR

But first, we need to get Gamzee somewhere safe. And we need to figure out what to do with a newly purified sentient crystal that controls an entire island. And then... we need to get home.

He walks back to Gamzee, gently shaking him awake.

THE DOCTOR

Gamzee. Time to wake up, you magnificent beast. We've got work to do.

Gamzee stirs, groaning. He opens his eyes, a flicker of awareness returning. He looks at the Doctor, then at the now-calm crystal.

GAMZEE

Did we... did we win, doc?

THE DOCTOR

We won a battle, Gamzee. The war, however, is just beginning. But we've got a fighting chance now. Thanks to you.

Gamzee grins, a tired but genuine smile.

GAMZEE

Heh. Knew I was good for somethin'. Now... where's that food you promised? All that ass-kickin' made me hungry. Real hungry.

INT. TREEHOUSE SHELTER - DAY (LATER)

SOUND of crackling fire, gentle jungle noises

Days turn into weeks. The treehouse, once a temporary refuge, has become a makeshift base of operations. The Doctor, Kankri, Finn, and Gamzee work tirelessly.

Gamzee, recovering from his injuries, takes on the role of protector and hunter. His strange connection to the island now allows him to navigate the jungle with uncanny precision, sensing dangers and finding resources. He brings back food, keeps watch, and occasionally disappears for hours, only to return with strange, luminous flowers or unusual fruits, claiming the Mother "told him where to look."

Kankri, with the Doctor's guidance and the sonic screwdriver's analytical capabilities, begins the arduous process of rehabilitating the cannibals. They establish a safe zone near the crystal cavern, providing food and medical care. Kankri's initial discomfort with their "unethical dietary practices" gradually gives way to a profound sense of responsibility. He teaches them basic communication, helps them relearn forgotten skills, and attempts to re-establish a sense of community. It's slow, agonizing work, but progress is made. The former cannibals, now called "the Lost," slowly begin to shed their feral ways, their eyes regaining a flicker of humanity.

Finn, meanwhile, becomes an invaluable scout and builder. He helps reinforce the treehouse, constructs new shelters for the Lost, and explores the island, discovering new resources and mapping out safe zones. He forges a surprising bond with some of the younger Lost, teaching them rudimentary games and helping them overcome their fear.

The Doctor, ever the orchestrator, coordinates their efforts. He studies the Mother crystal, learning its language, understanding its needs. He discovers that the Mother, now free of the parasite, is slowly beginning to heal the

island, purifying the tainted soil and revitalizing the flora. He also begins to devise a plan for getting them all home. He scavenges parts from the plane wreckage, creating a makeshift communication device, hoping to send a distress signal.

One evening, gathered around a small fire in the treehouse, a sense of weary contentment settles over them. The sounds of the jungle are no longer threatening, but comforting.

FINN

They're getting better, Doctor. The Lost. They even smiled today! One of them, he drew a picture of a flower for me.

KANKRI

Indeed. The rate of cognitive recovery, while still nascent, is exceeding my initial projections. The therapeutic benefits of a stable environment and consistent positive reinforcement are undeniable.

Gamzee, sharpening his axe by the firelight, grunts in agreement.

GAMZEE

Yeah. They're still a little twitchy. But they ain't tryin' to eat each other anymore. That's a win in my book.

THE DOCTOR

It is, Gamzee. A big win. And it's all thanks to all of you.

He looks at each of them, a genuine warmth in his eyes.

THE DOCTOR

We've built something here. Something remarkable. A community. A sanctuary.

KANKRI

A temporary sanctuary, Doctor. We must not lose sight of our primary objective: extrication from this environment.

THE DOCTOR

And we will, Kankri. I've almost got the comms array working. Just a few more tweaks. But what we've done here... it matters. This island, these people... they needed us. And we needed them, in a way.

Gamzee looks up from his axe, his eyes fixed on the Doctor.

GAMZEE

So, when we go... what happens to them? To the Mother?

The Doctor pauses, his gaze drifting towards the distant glow of the crystal cavern.

THE DOCTOR

The Mother will continue to heal. She's strong. And the Lost... they'll have a chance. A chance to rebuild. To forge a new path. They'll remember what we taught them. And they'll remember what happened. It will be their story now.

FINN

Will they be okay without us?

THE DOCTOR

They'll have to be, Finn. But they're not alone anymore. They have each other. And they have the Mother.

Suddenly, the makeshift communication device, cobbled together from plane parts, SPUTTERS to life. Static fills the air, then a faint, crackling voice.

VOICE (O.S.)

...distress signal... anyone there? This is... rescue team... repeat, anyone there?

The Doctor's eyes widen. He scrambles to the device, adjusting the dials.

THE DOCTOR

Yes! Yes, this is the Doctor! We're here! We're alive! We're on... a rather peculiar island! Coordinates are...

He rattles off the coordinates, his voice filled with a triumphant joy.

Kankri lets out a gasp of relief, slumping against the tree trunk. Finn jumps up and down, cheering. Gamzee, a rare, soft smile gracing his lips, simply nods, a quiet satisfaction in his eyes.

VOICE (O.S.)

...Roger that, Doctor! Holding coordinates! ETA approximately... 24 hours. Hold tight!

The signal cuts out, leaving behind a ringing silence, filled with the promise of rescue.

THE DOCTOR

Twenty-four hours! We did it! We're going home!

He claps Kankri on the shoulder, then ruffles Finn's hair. He looks at Gamzee, a profound gratitude in his eyes.

THE DOCTOR

All of us. We're going home.

Gamzee looks out into the jungle, a complex mixture of emotions on his face. Relief, yes. But also something else. A flicker of melancholy. A sense of belonging, perhaps, to this strange, brutal, beautiful island.

He glances at the axe resting beside him, then at the distant, gentle glow of the Mother crystal.

GAMZEE

Yeah. Home.

He closes his eyes, a final, quiet moment of reflection, before the reality of their impending departure truly sets in. The jungle hums around them, a final lullaby to their extraordinary adventure.

FADE TO BLACK.

CHAPTER 6

INT. TREEHOUSE SHELTER - DAY

SOUND of jungle birds, the distant hum of the Mother crystal

The morning sun casts long shadows across the treehouse. The air is thick with anticipation, a nervous energy that crackles between the four survivors. The makeshift communication device, now silent, sits on a salvaged crate, a beacon of hope.

KANKRI, meticulous as ever, meticulously packs his few belongings – his notepad, salvaged writing implements, and a small, strangely ornate stone he found near the Mother crystal. He moves with a quiet efficiency, his usual anxiety replaced by a focused determination.

FINN, unable to sit still, paces the small platform, occasionally peeking through the leafy canopy, scanning the horizon. His plastic sword is sheathed, but his eyes are bright with a mixture of excitement and a touch of something akin to sadness.

GAMZEE, surprisingly, is quiet. He sits cross-legged, the bone-studded axe resting across his lap, his gaze fixed on the dense jungle. His face, usually a canvas of manic grins or vacant stares, is unreadable, a complex tapestry of thought.

THE DOCTOR, a whirlwind of tweed and nervous energy, checks and rechecks the communication device. He polishes his sonic screwdriver, then cleans his spectacles, then adjusts his bow tie for the tenth time.

THE DOCTOR

Twenty-four hours. That's what they said. Twenty-four hours. Seems an eternity, doesn't it? Or perhaps, a mere blink. Time is such a tricksy thing. Especially when you're waiting.

KANKRI

Indeed. The subjective perception of temporal progression is directly correlated with the emotional intensity of the anticipation. In this instance, the anticipation of rescue significantly elongates the perceived duration.

FINN

I just hope they find us. What if they don't? What if it was a trick?

The Doctor turns, a reassuring smile on his face.

THE DOCTOR

No tricks, Finn. That was a legitimate distress call. Clear as a bell. They'll be here. They always are. Eventually.

He glances at Gamzee, who remains silent, unmoving.

THE DOCTOR

Gamzee? You're awfully quiet this morning. Everything alright?

Gamzee slowly turns his head, his yellow eyes meeting the Doctor's.

GAMZEE

Just... thinkin', doc. About everything. About this place. About... her.

He gestures vaguely towards the direction of the Mother crystal.

GAMZEE

She's getting stronger. I can feel it. The trees are standing taller. The air smells cleaner. She's healing.

KANKRI

A remarkable rate of ecological recovery, given the extent of the parasitic infestation. A testament to the Mother's inherent resilience.

FINN

So, the Lost will be okay? When we leave?

Gamzee nods slowly.

GAMZEE

They'll be okay. She'll watch over them. And they'll remember. They'll remember what it's like to be... just people. Not just puppets.

A heavy silence descends. The reality of their departure, and what they would be leaving behind, settles over them.

THE DOCTOR

We've done good here, Gamzee. All of us. We gave them a chance. A new beginning.

Gamzee grunts, then slowly rises. He walks to the edge of the platform, looking out at the vast, green expanse.

GAMZEE

Yeah. A new beginning. For them.

He turns back, his gaze sweeping over the Doctor, Kankri, and Finn.

GAMZEE

But what about us, doc? What's our new beginning? We just... go back to where we were? Like none of this ever happened?

Kankri adjusts his glasses.

KANKRI

The psychological impact of such a traumatic experience will undoubtedly necessitate extensive post-incident debriefing and potential therapeutic intervention. A complete return to a pre-trauma psychological state is highly improbable.

THE DOCTOR

Kankri's right. You don't go through something like this and come out unchanged. We're all different now. Stronger, I hope. Wiser, I'd like to think. And we'll carry this with us. Always.

He looks at Gamzee, a deeper understanding in his eyes.

THE DOCTOR

But that's not a bad thing, Gamzee. It's part of the journey. Part of who we are. And who we're becoming.

Gamzee stares at him for a long moment, then a slow, almost melancholic smile touches his lips.

GAMZEE

Yeah. Guess so.

He turns back to the jungle, his eyes lingering on a distant, impossibly tall tree.

GAMZEE

I think... I'm gonna take a walk. One last walk. Before the big bird comes.

KANKRI

Gamzee, I must advise against solitary excursions at this critical juncture! The potential for unforeseen complications is still elevated!

GAMZEE

Chill, Kankri. I ain't gonna get lost. This place... it talks to me. And I gotta say goodbye. To the Mother. To the trees. To the dirt. It's been real.

He slings the axe over his shoulder and, with a final, lingering look at the treehouse, descends the ladder, disappearing into the dense foliage.

Kankri throws his hands up in exasperation.

KANKRI

Unacceptable! This is a flagrant disregard for established safety protocols! His emotional state is clearly compromised!

THE DOCTOR

Let him go, Kankri. He needs this. He has a deeper connection to this place than any of us. He needs to say his goodbyes.

Finn looks at the Doctor, then at the spot where Gamzee disappeared.

FINN

You think he'll come back?

The Doctor's smile is tinged with uncertainty.

THE DOCTOR

I hope so, Finn. I truly hope so.

The hours drag on. The sun climbs higher, then begins its slow descent. The jungle, usually teeming with life, feels quieter, as if holding its breath. Kankri busies himself with checking their supplies, ensuring everything is ready for their departure. Finn scans the horizon with renewed intensity, his excitement now mixed with a growing anxiety.

The Doctor occasionally tries to hail the rescue team, but the device remains silent, a constant reminder of the waiting.

As dusk begins to settle, painting the sky in fiery oranges and purples, a low, distant ROAR echoes through the jungle. It's not the sound of a cannibal. It's something larger. Something more primal.

FINN

What was that?!

KANKRI

It sounds like a large, apex predator. Perhaps a... a mutated bear? Or a large feline?

The Doctor's face tightens. He pulls out his sonic screwdriver, scanning the jungle.

THE DOCTOR

It's coming from the direction Gamzee went. And it sounds... distressed.

Another ROAR, closer this time, followed by a series of crashing sounds, like trees being torn from their roots.

THE DOCTOR

Something's happening out there. Something big.

He looks at Kankri and Finn.

THE DOCTOR

We stay here. We're safe in the treehouse. Whatever it is, it's not our fight.

But a nagging feeling, a deep sense of unease, gnaws at him. Gamzee. He couldn't just leave him. Not after everything.

Suddenly, a series of frantic, desperate HOWLS erupts from the jungle. The Lost. The rehabilitated cannibals. They sound terrified.

FINN

The Lost! They're in trouble!

KANKRI

Their cries indicate extreme distress! The sounds are emanating from the direction of their temporary encampment!

The Doctor hesitates for only a moment. He looks at the communication device, still silent. The rescue team is hours away.

THE DOCTOR

Right. We can't abandon them. Kankri, Finn, stay here. Keep watch. If the rescue team arrives, signal them. Tell them... tell them we're dealing with a local disturbance.

KANKRI

Doctor, this is an unacceptable risk assessment! You cannot confront an unknown, powerful entity alone!

THE DOCTOR

I won't be alone. Gamzee's out there. And I have a sonic screwdriver. What could possibly go wrong?

He gives them a quick, reassuring smile that doesn't quite reach his eyes, then descends the ladder, disappearing into the growing darkness.

FINN

He's crazy!

KANKRI

He is operating on an illogical, emotionally driven impulse. However, given our current circumstances, such irrationality may prove to be our only viable option.

INT. JUNGLE - DUSK

SOUND of snapping branches, distant roars, terrified screams

The Doctor moves through the jungle, his sonic screwdriver cutting a path through the encroaching darkness. The air is thick with the scent of ozone and something else, something ancient and terrifying. The howls of the Lost grow louder, more desperate.

He reaches the edge of the Lost's encampment. It's in chaos. Crude shelters are torn apart. Figures, once calm and composed, now cower, their eyes wide with primal fear.

In the center of the clearing, a monstrosity.

It's a creature of the island, a manifestation of its deepest, most primal fears. It's enormous, easily twenty feet tall, a grotesque amalgamation of mutated jungle flora and fauna. Its body is a mass of gnarled roots and vines, covered in jagged bark and razor-sharp thorns. Its head is a nightmare of interlocking bone plates, with multiple, glowing red eyes that dart around with malevolent intent. Its limbs are like tree trunks, ending in massive, clawed hands. It radiates an aura of pure, unadulterated rage.

It's the parasitic entity. Or what's left of it. The part that was cut from the Mother, but not destroyed. It has manifested physically, feeding on the island's raw energy, growing, evolving.

It lashes out with a thorny vine, snatching one of the Lost, crushing him in its grip. The Lost's scream is abruptly cut short.

THE DOCTOR

No!

He rushes forward, aiming his sonic screwdriver at the creature. The device emits a high-frequency pulse, designed to disorient. The creature flinches, its multiple eyes blinking rapidly, but it barely slows down. It turns its attention to the Doctor, its glowing red eyes fixing on him. It lets out a deafening ROAR, a sound that vibrates in his bones.

THE DOCTOR

Right. That's not good.

It lunges, its massive clawed hand sweeping towards him. The Doctor ducks, rolling under its arm, narrowly avoiding being crushed. He scrambles to his feet, trying to think, trying to find a weakness.

The creature is too big, too powerful. His sonic screwdriver is a tool, not a weapon.

Just as the creature prepares another strike, a familiar, guttural WAR CRY echoes through the clearing.

GAMZEE (O.S.)

HEY, MOTHERFUCKER! YOU WANT A PIECE OF ME?!

Gamzee, covered in mud and leaves, bursts into the clearing, the bone-studded axe held high. He's a tiny, insignificant speck compared to the monstrous entity, but his presence radiates an undeniable, furious energy.

THE DOCTOR

Gamzee! You madman!

Gamzee doesn't acknowledge him. He charges, a blur of purple and grey, straight at the creature's leg, hacking at the thick, woody hide with surprising force. The axe bites deep, tearing through bark and sinew.

The creature roars in pain, turning its attention to Gamzee. It lashes out with a thorny vine, wrapping it around Gamzee's torso, lifting him into the air. Gamzee struggles, still hacking at the vine with his axe, his face contorted in a mask of primal fury.

GAMZEE

Let go of me, you ugly piece of shit! You ain't gonna hurt the Mother's children!

The creature squeezes, its thorns digging into Gamzee's flesh. Blood blooms across his grey skin.

THE DOCTOR

Gamzee!

The Doctor scans the creature, desperate. He notices a faint, almost imperceptible GLOW emanating from a specific point on its chest, partially

obscured by the thick bark. It's a pulsating orb, the core of its being, the last remnant of the parasitic entity.

THE DOCTOR

Gamzee! The chest! Aim for the glowing orb! It's its heart!

Gamzee, struggling for breath, looks down, his eyes widening as he sees the pulsating orb. He gathers all his remaining strength, raises his axe, and with a final, defiant ROAR, brings it down, aiming for the glowing weakness.

The axe connects with a sickening CRUNCH. The creature lets out a deafening, agonizing SCREECH, a sound that rips through the very fabric of the jungle. Its multiple red eyes flicker, then dim. The thorny vine holding Gamzee loosens its grip. Gamzee falls, landing hard on the ground, his axe still embedded in the creature's chest.

The monstrous entity staggers, its massive body swaying. The glowing orb in its chest flickers, then explodes in a shower of black, corrosive energy. The creature begins to unravel, its body dissolving into a cloud of ash and dust, its massive form crumbling like an ancient ruin. The air fills with the smell of burnt leaves and ozone.

Within moments, nothing remains but a pile of black ash and a lingering, acrid smell.

Gamzee lies motionless on the ground, his body bruised and battered, his breathing shallow. The axe lies beside him, its bone handle cracked.

The Doctor rushes to his side, checking for a pulse. It's faint, but there.

THE DOCTOR

Gamzee? Gamzee, can you hear me?

Gamzee's eyes flutter open. He looks at the Doctor, then at the pile of ash where the creature once stood. A weak smile touches his lips.

GAMZEE

Told you... I was good for somethin', doc.

He closes his eyes again, his breathing growing shallower.

THE DOCTOR

No, no, no, Gamzee! Stay with me! We're going home! Remember? We're all going home!

He desperately scans Gamzee with his sonic screwdriver. The readings are grim. Internal bleeding. Multiple fractures. His life force is fading.

Suddenly, the ground begins to TREMBLE. A soft, emerald light emanates from the ground around Gamzee. The air fills with a sweet, earthy scent. Roots, glowing with a gentle green light, emerge from the earth, gently wrapping around Gamzee's broken body. They pulse with a warm, life-giving energy.

The Doctor stares, bewildered.

THE DOCTOR

The Mother. She's... she's healing him.

The emerald light intensifies, bathing Gamzee in its glow. His wounds begin to close. His breathing deepens, becoming steady. The fractured bones knit together. The blood stains on his skin fade away.

Gamzee's eyes open again. He looks at the Doctor, then at the glowing roots, then at his now-healed body. He sits up, testing his limbs, a look of profound wonder on his face.

GAMZEE

Whoa. That's... that's righteous. She really does love her children.

The Doctor, overcome with relief, simply stares.

Suddenly, a loud, whirring sound echoes from the sky above. A bright light cuts through the twilight.

FINN (O.S.)

DOCTOR! KANKRI! THEY'RE HERE! THE RESCUE TEAM!

A large RESCUE SHIP descends from the sky, its powerful searchlights illuminating the clearing. Figures in uniform rappel down.

The Doctor looks at Gamzee, then at the approaching rescue team.

THE DOCTOR

Right. Perfect timing. As usual.

He stands, a weary but triumphant smile on his face.

THE DOCTOR

Come on, Gamzee. Let's go home.

Gamzee looks at the rescue ship, then at the glowing roots that still cling to him, then at the Lost, who are slowly beginning to emerge from their hiding places, watching with wide, hopeful eyes.

He takes a deep breath, the scent of the jungle filling his lungs.

GAMZEE

You guys go on ahead, doc. I think... I think I'm gonna stay.

The Doctor stares at him, dumbfounded.

THE DOCTOR

Stay? Gamzee, what are you talking about? We're going home!

Gamzee shakes his head, a resolute look on his face.

GAMZEE

This is my home now, doc. The Mother... she needs me. And the Lost... they need me. They're just finding their way. And I... I think I finally found mine.

He looks at the Doctor, a genuine warmth in his yellow eyes.

GAMZEE

You guys got your own journeys. Your own places to be. But this place... it's a part of me now. And I'm a part of it.

Kankri, who has arrived with Finn, looks at Gamzee, then at the glowing roots.

KANKRI

His symbiotic relationship with the Mother crystal appears to have solidified. He is now intrinsically linked to the island's ecosystem. His departure would cause significant physiological and psychological trauma.

FINN

You're really staying, Gamzee?

Gamzee nods, a soft smile on his face.

GAMZEE

Yeah, little man. Someone's gotta make sure these motherfuckers don't go back to their old ways. And someone's gotta keep the Mother company. She's been through a lot.

The Doctor looks at Gamzee, a profound sadness in his eyes, but also a deep respect.

THE DOCTOR

You're a good man, Gamzee Makara. A truly extraordinary man.

He extends his hand. Gamzee takes it, and they share a silent, powerful moment.

GAMZEE

You too, doc. You too. Now go on. Your ride's here.

The Doctor, Kankri, and Finn walk towards the rescue ship, leaving Gamzee behind, standing amidst the glowing roots, a solitary figure watching over his new home, his new family.

As the Doctor ascends the ramp, he looks back one last time. Gamzee is still there, silhouetted against the emerald glow of the healing jungle, a guardian of a new beginning.

FADE TO BLACK.

CHAPTER 7

INT. RESCUE SHIP - INFIRMARY - DAY

SOUND of medical equipment beeping, hushed voices

The rescue ship is a marvel of modern, albeit not interdimensional, technology. White, sterile walls, flashing monitors, and the comforting hum of advanced machinery replace the oppressive humidity and primal fear of the jungle.

KANKRI VANTAS lies on a crisp, white bed, surrounded by medical personnel. His blood pressure, heart rate, and various other physiological markers are

being meticulously monitored. Despite the comfort, his brow is furrowed in thought, his eyes wide as he processes the last few weeks.

FINN sits on an adjacent bed, swinging his legs, a clean, new set of clothes replacing his tattered adventure gear. He munches on a protein bar, his plastic sword now carefully placed on a bedside table. He looks out of a small, reinforced viewport, watching the jungle island shrink into the distance.

THE DOCTOR, though offered a bed, paces the infirmary, too restless for repose. He engages in a rapid-fire conversation with a bewildered SHIP'S DOCTOR, a stern-faced woman in a pristine white uniform.

SHIP'S DOCTOR

And you say this individual, 'Gamzee,' chose to remain on the island, despite the... the obvious dangers? And you believe he has some sort of symbiotic relationship with a sentient crystal?

THE DOCTOR

Not 'believe,' Doctor. I know. I saw it. He was intrinsically linked. The Mother, as he called it, healed him. And he, in turn, is now its guardian. A truly fascinating case study in interspecies symbiosis, not to mention a groundbreaking example of rapid ecological restoration!

SHIP'S DOCTOR

(Skeptical)

Right. And the indigenous population, the 'Lost,' as you refer to them, are now... peaceful? Rehabilitated? After exhibiting extreme aggression and cannibalistic tendencies?

THE DOCTOR

A testament to Kankri's remarkable psychological intervention, combined with the Mother's purifying influence. They're on a long road to recovery, but they're no longer controlled by the parasitic entity. They're free. And they have a chance.

Kankri, overhearing, adjusts his glasses.

KANKRI

The therapeutic methodology involved a multi-faceted approach, integrating cognitive restructuring, environmental conditioning, and the establishment of a new, prosocial communal framework. It is an ongoing process, of course.

The Ship's Doctor stares at them, her expression a mixture of professional curiosity and profound disbelief.

SHIP'S DOCTOR

I... see. And your TARDIS, Doctor? You mentioned it was separated from you? We found no wreckage consistent with a trans-dimensional vehicle.

The Doctor sighs, running a hand through his already wild hair.

THE DOCTOR

No, you wouldn't. It's a time machine, a spaceship, a dimension hopper. It's camouflaged. And it's probably light-years away by now, trying to find me. It has a mind of its own, you see. A rather stubborn one.

He looks out the viewport, a wistful expression on his face.

THE DOCTOR

Still, I'll need to send out a beacon. A very specific, very subtle beacon. Wouldn't want to cause a paradox, would we? That would be terribly inconvenient.

Finn finishes his protein bar, then looks at the Doctor.

FINN

So, what happens now? Are we going home? To our own homes?

The Doctor turns to Finn, his smile softening.

THE DOCTOR

That's the plan, Finn. We'll get you back to your own time, your own dimension. Back to your treehouse, your best friend Jake, and all your adventures. Though, I suspect this one will stick with you for a while.

Finn nods, a small, sad smile on his face.

FINN

Yeah. It was... intense. But awesome. And kinda scary. I'll miss Gamzee. And the Mother.

KANKRI

Indeed. The formation of unexpected interpersonal bonds, even in extremis, is a well-documented psychological phenomenon. Though I must confess, Gamzee's particular brand of 'bonding' was... unique.

The Doctor winks.

THE DOCTOR

He's found his purpose, Kankri. And that's a rare and beautiful thing.

Suddenly, a uniformed OFFICER enters the infirmary.

OFFICER

Doctor. We've reached the designated drop-off point for Finn. It's a precise temporal and spatial coordinate. Any deviation could have... unforeseen consequences.

THE DOCTOR

Excellent! Lead the way, Officer! Finn, ready for your next adventure?

Finn nods eagerly, grabbing his plastic sword.

INT. RESCUE SHIP - TRANSPORTER BAY - DAY

The transporter bay is a cavernous space, filled with shimmering energy fields and complex machinery. A large, circular platform hums with a soft, blue light.

THE DOCTOR

Alright, Finn. This is it. Step onto the platform. It'll send you right back. To the moment you left, give or take a few seconds. You'll probably just think you hit your head.

Finn steps onto the platform, looking a little nervous, but mostly excited.

FINN

So, I won't remember any of this? About the cannibals, and Gamzee, and the Mother?

The Doctor hesitates, then smiles.

THE DOCTOR

You'll remember the important bits, Finn. The feeling of adventure. The courage you found. The friends you made. And the lessons you learned. The universe has a way of ensuring the right memories stick.

He gives Finn a thumbs up.

THE DOCTOR

Go on, then. Go be a hero.

Finn grins, a wide, genuine Finn-grin.

FINN

Algebraic! Bye, Doctor! Bye, Kankri!

He waves, and with a flash of blue light and a soft HUM, he vanishes.

Kankri sighs, a profound sense of relief washing over him.

KANKRI

The successful reintegration of the subject into his native temporal continuum. A relief.

THE DOCTOR

He'll be fine. He's Finn. He's got a good heart. And a plastic sword. What more could a hero ask for?

INT. RESCUE SHIP - BRIDGE - DAY

The Doctor and Kankri stand on the bridge, looking out at the endless expanse of stars. The Ship's Captain, a grizzled veteran, sits at the helm.

CAPTAIN

Alright, Doctor. We've dropped off your... young friend. Now, where to next? Your coordinates for your own homeworld? Or perhaps a suitable planet where we can drop off... your other companion?

He glances at Kankri, who stares intently at a star map.

KANKRI

My homeworld, Alternia, is currently in a state of advanced societal collapse. The journey would be... inadvisable. And the temporal displacement would be highly problematic.

THE DOCTOR

Indeed. Kankri's situation is a bit more complex. He's from a universe that's... well, it's a bit of a mess right now. And I can't just drop him off in the middle of a collapsing timeline. It would be rude. And potentially catastrophic.

CAPTAIN

So, what's the plan? We can't just keep him. He's not... standard issue.

KANKRI

I am a sentient, sapient being, Captain. I am not 'issue.' And my presence, while potentially disruptive to your established protocols, is not without merit. My knowledge of xenolinguistics and theoretical physics could prove invaluable.

The Doctor grins, clapping Kankri on the shoulder.

THE DOCTOR

He's right, Captain! Kankri is a brilliant mind. And he's just survived a cannibal-infested island with me. He's practically an honorary companion!

CAPTAIN

(Sighs)

An honorary companion. Right. Look, Doctor, I appreciate your... enthusiasm. But we have regulations. And a schedule. We can't just pick up strays from other dimensions.

THE DOCTOR

He's not a stray! He's... he's a refugee! From a timeline in distress! Think of it as a humanitarian mission! Besides, I need his help. With the TARDIS beacon. His knowledge of complex temporal mechanics might be just what I need to pinpoint its exact location.

Kankri perks up, a flicker of scientific interest in his eyes.

KANKRI

My understanding of the paradox mitigation principles of a Type 40 TARDIS, while theoretical, is quite extensive. I could certainly assist in recalibrating your temporal signature.

The Captain rubs his temples.

CAPTAIN

Fine. One planet. One drop-off. You help him find his... blue box. Then he's your problem. Not mine.

The Doctor beams.

THE DOCTOR

Splendid! Kankri, my boy, looks like you're coming with me! For a bit, anyway. Until we find your own way home. Or a suitable alternative. The universe is full of possibilities! And tea! Hopefully.

Kankri, despite his usual reserved demeanor, feels a strange surge of excitement. The thought of exploring the universe with the Doctor, of encountering new phenomena, new problems to solve... it was a daunting, yet exhilarating prospect.

KANKRI

I shall endeavor to be a productive and non-problematic addition to your... travels. Though I must insist on periodic debriefings regarding the societal implications of your interventions.

THE DOCTOR

Deal! Now, Captain, set a course for... well, somewhere quiet. Somewhere with a good cup of tea. And maybe, just maybe, a temporal anomaly or two. For Kankri's benefit, of course.

The Captain shakes his head, a faint, almost imperceptible smile touching his lips.

CAPTAIN

You got it, Doctor. Anything for a good cup of tea.

INT. RESCUE SHIP - CORRIDOR - NIGHT

Kankri and the Doctor walk down a sterile corridor. Kankri is now wearing a clean, if slightly ill-fitting, jumpsuit provided by the ship.

KANKRI

So, Doctor, this 'TARDIS' of yours. It is truly a sentient entity capable of independent thought and action?

THE DOCTOR

Oh, absolutely! More so than most people, I'd wager. She's ancient, temperamental, and occasionally takes me exactly where I need to be, even if it's not where I *think* I need to be. Like that island. She probably knew we were needed there.

KANKRI

An interesting hypothesis. The concept of pre-cognitive, non-linear navigation is... intriguing. And potentially highly efficient.

THE DOCTOR

It has its moments. And its headaches. But she's the best ship in the universe. And she's out there, waiting for me. And with your help, Kankri, we'll find her.

He stops at a door, opening it. It's a small, private cabin, with a bed, a desk, and a viewport.

THE DOCTOR

Your quarters. Make yourself at home. There's a replicator if you need anything. Just... try not to ask for anything too exotic. They get confused.

Kankri enters the cabin, looking around with a critical eye.

KANKRI

Adequate. Though the lack of natural light is a concern for proper vitamin D synthesis. And the air filtration system appears to be operating at a sub-optimal level for maintaining ideal atmospheric particulate ratios.

THE DOCTOR

(Chuckles)

You'll get used to it. Or you'll complain about it constantly. Either way, it'll be an adventure. Get some rest, Kankri. Tomorrow, we start looking for a big blue box.

He turns to leave, then pauses.

THE DOCTOR

You know, Kankri. You did good back there. Really good. You helped those people. You made a difference.

Kankri looks at him, a faint blush creeping across his grey skin.

KANKRI

I merely applied established theoretical frameworks to a practical, albeit highly unconventional, scenario. It was... a duty.

THE DOCTOR

It was more than that. It was compassion. Don't ever underestimate that, Kankri. It's the most powerful force in the universe.

He winks, then closes the door, leaving Kankri alone in the sterile cabin.

Kankri stands in the middle of the room, surrounded by the quiet hum of the ship. He looks out the viewport, at the swirling nebulae and distant stars. He thinks of the island, of the Mother, of Gamzee. He thinks of Finn, off on his own adventures. He thinks of the Lost, slowly healing, finding their way.

And he thinks of the Doctor, this eccentric, brilliant, infuriating man who had pulled him from a plane crash and into an adventure he never could have imagined.

He touches the small, ornate stone he found near the Mother crystal, pulling it from his pocket. It glows faintly with a soft, emerald light. A tangible reminder of the island, of the life they saved, of the friend they left behind.

He places the stone on the desk, then walks to the bed. He lies down, but sleep does not come easily. His mind is too active, too filled with the newness of it all. He is no longer just Kankri Vantas, the perpetually anxious troll from a doomed timeline. He is Kankri Vantas, survivor, healer, and now... companion. The universe, it seemed, had a great deal more to teach him.

He smiles, a genuine, unselfconscious smile. For the first time in a long time, he feels a sense of purpose. A sense of belonging.

The journey, it seemed, was just beginning.

FADE TO BLACK.

CHAPTER 8

INT. RESCUE SHIP - REPAIR BAY - DAY

SOUND of clanging metal, sparking wires, the Doctor humming off-key

The rescue ship's repair bay is a vast, echoing space, filled with tools, spare parts, and the faint smell of ozone. THE DOCTOR, in his element, is a whirlwind of activity, perched precariously on a scaffold, surrounded by a tangle of wires and blinking lights. His sonic screwdriver buzzes incessantly as he prods and pokes at a complex piece of alien machinery.

KANKRI VANTAS, surprisingly, is right there with him, though on a more stable footing. He meticulously sorts through schematics, his brow furrowed in concentration, occasionally offering a precise, technical suggestion that makes the Doctor pause and reconsider.

THE DOCTOR

No, no, no, Kankri! The phase modulator goes *here*, not there! If we cross the temporal harmonics with the quantum entanglement field, we'll end up with a localized spacetime distortion, and then we'll be looking for the TARDIS in, oh, say, the Cretaceous period! And I really don't fancy being lunch for a particularly grumpy Triceratops. Not today, anyway.

KANKRI

(Adjusting his glasses)

My apologies, Doctor. However, the schematic clearly indicates a primary conduit divergence at this nexus point, suggesting a compensatory feedback loop for recalibrating the chronal displacement vector. If we do not account for the inherent instability of a Type 40 TARDIS's temporal signature when dislocated from its primary anchor, we risk further exacerbating its probabilistic location.

The Doctor pauses, scratching his chin.

THE DOCTOR

Hmm. Probabilistic location. You've got a point. A very good, incredibly long-winded point. Right, then. Compensatory feedback loop it is. Pass me the plasma wrench, would you? And try not to lecture it. It's sensitive.

Kankri hands him a tool, a faint, almost imperceptible smile touching his lips. He finds a strange satisfaction in this collaboration, in the precise application of his vast, if often abstract, knowledge.

Weeks have passed since they left the island. The rescue ship, after dropping off Finn (who likely woke up in his treehouse, convinced he'd had a particularly vivid dream), has been ferrying Kankri and the Doctor across vast stretches of space, following the Doctor’s increasingly complex calculations in an attempt to pinpoint the TARDIS.

THE DOCTOR

The TARDIS beacon is a tricky thing. It's not just a radio signal. It's a dimensional hum, a temporal echo. And it's faint. Very, very faint. But it's there. Just needs a bit of a... directional boost. And a lot of Kankri's brainpower.

KANKRI

My cerebral processing capabilities are merely being utilized for their intended purpose. Though I must admit, the complexities of non-linear temporal mechanics are proving to be a rather stimulating challenge. Far more so than debating the ethical implications of various forms of fan fiction.

The Doctor chuckles, tightening a bolt.

THE DOCTOR

Oh, I'm sure. Though I'd pay good money to hear you debate the ethical implications of a particularly egregious fanfic. Sounds like a riot.

Suddenly, the console they're working on SPUTTERS, then glows with a steady, blue light. A holographic display flickers to life, showing a swirling vortex of colors.

THE DOCTOR

Aha! There! That's it! The TARDIS! Right there! A tiny, infinitesimally small blip in the temporal currents, but it's her! She's holding steady!

KANKRI

(Leaning closer)

The coordinates are stabilizing. A Class 7 planetary body. Binary star system. And... an unusual atmospheric composition. High levels of... something.

THE DOCTOR

Yes! Something! Brilliant! Captain! Set a course! Full speed ahead! We're going to get my TARDIS back!

INT. RESCUE SHIP - BRIDGE - CONTINUOUS

The CAPTAIN, a weary but professional figure, punches in the coordinates. The ship shudders, then accelerates, jumping through hyperspace. Stars streak past the viewport, blurring into an endless tunnel of light.

CAPTAIN

Estimated arrival in three hours, Doctor. What should we expect on this Class 7? Any indigenous life forms? Hostiles?

THE DOCTOR

Oh, I haven't the foggiest! That's the fun bit! But the TARDIS usually lands somewhere... interesting. It's got a flair for the dramatic, my old girl. Just make sure your shields are up. And maybe have a cup of tea ready. For me. And Kankri. He's earned it.

Kankri, for his part, is staring intently at the holographic display, a strange mixture of excitement and trepidation on his face.

KANKRI

The atmospheric readings are fluctuating erratically. And there appears to be a localized energy signature. Potentially a spatial anomaly, or a highly advanced technological construct.

THE DOCTOR

See? Already getting into the swing of things! You'll make a brilliant companion, Kankri! Just remember, sometimes the best solution is the most outlandish. And always carry a banana. Never know when you'll need one.

Kankri nods slowly, processing the information. The universe, it seemed, was even stranger than he had imagined.

EXT. ALIEN PLANET - LANDING ZONE - DAY

SOUND of wind, distant, echoing howls

The rescue ship hovers above a desolate, alien landscape. The sky is a perpetual twilight, illuminated by the twin red suns of the binary system, casting long, crimson shadows across a barren, rocky terrain. Strange, twisted rock formations jut from the ground like petrified giants. The air is thin, metallic, and carries a faint, acrid smell.

CAPTAIN (V.O.)

Atmosphere is breathable, Doctor, but thin. Gravity is 1.2 G. Scans indicate no immediate life signs, but there are fluctuating energy readings. And a localized temporal distortion. Right where your TARDIS should be.

The Doctor, Kankri, and a small team of security officers descend the ramp. The Doctor is practically bouncing with excitement. Kankri, however, is wary, his eyes scanning the desolate landscape.

KANKRI

The environmental conditions are highly unfavorable for most known terrestrial life forms. The high gravity, the thin atmosphere, the radiation from the binary suns... this planet appears to be actively hostile.

THE DOCTOR

Nonsense, Kankri! It's just... moody! And look! There she is!

He points to a familiar, albeit slightly battered, blue police box, sitting incongruously amidst the alien rocks. It's shimmering, slightly out of phase with reality, hinting at the temporal distortion around it.

THE DOCTOR

My beautiful girl! She's been through a lot, I can tell. But she's holding strong!

He rushes towards the TARDIS, his face alight with joy. Kankri follows, his pace more measured, his eyes still sweeping the horizon. The security officers fan out, weapons at the ready, their faces grim.

As the Doctor approaches the TARDIS, a low, guttural HOWL echoes from a nearby rocky outcrop. It's a sound that seems to vibrate in their very bones, a sound of ancient, primal hunger.

OFFICER 1

Contact! Life signs detected! Multiple! And they're not friendly!

From the shadows of the twisted rock formations, creatures emerge. They are hulking, vaguely reptilian beasts, with thick, armored hides, razor-sharp claws, and glowing red eyes. Their mouths are filled with rows of needle-like teeth, and their bodies shimmer with an unearthly energy, hinting at their connection to the planet's strange properties.

KANKRI

(Voice tight)

The energy fluctuations! They are emanating from these entities! They appear to be bio-engineered, or perhaps naturally evolved, to thrive in this hostile environment! And they are clearly territorial!

THE DOCTOR

Oh, bother. Always something, isn't there? Right. Everyone, weapons on stun! We don't want to hurt them if we don't have to! They're just defending their territory!

The creatures, however, don't seem interested in negotiation. They charge, their howls filling the air.

The security officers open fire, their stun blasts arcing through the twilight. The creatures roar in pain, but their armored hides deflect most of the energy. They are fast, relentless.

OFFICER 2

They're too strong, sir! Stun blasts aren't holding them!

The Doctor, caught between the charging creatures and his TARDIS, pulls out his sonic screwdriver. He aims it at the ground, creating a high-frequency pulse that causes a localized tremor. The creatures stumble, momentarily disoriented.

THE DOCTOR

Kankri! Get to the TARDIS! See if you can get the door open! It might still be locked to me!

Kankri, despite his fear, nods. He weaves through the chaos, dodging a snapping jaw, scrambling towards the shimmering blue box.

The Doctor continues to use his sonic screwdriver, creating distractions, disorienting the creatures, buying Kankri time. But there are too many of them. One of the creatures, larger than the rest, slams into the Doctor,

sending him flying. He lands hard, his head hitting a rock. His sonic screwdriver clatters away, landing out of reach.

KANKRI

Doctor!

Kankri reaches the TARDIS. He tries the door, but it's locked, humming with a strange, internal energy. He runs his hand over the surface, his knowledge of temporal mechanics kicking in.

KANKRI

It is locked with a temporal seal! It recognizes the Doctor's unique bio-signature, but the temporal displacement has created a harmonic dissonance! I need to re-align the chronal frequencies!

He frantically pulls out a small, portable device from his jumpsuit pocket – a multi-tool given to him by the rescue ship's engineers. He begins to interface it with the TARDIS's exterior, his fingers flying across the controls.

Meanwhile, the Doctor struggles to his feet, dazed. The large creature advances, its glowing red eyes fixed on him, its mouth dripping with saliva.

THE DOCTOR

Right. Plan B, then. Or is it C? Always get those mixed up.

He looks around, desperate. No sonic. No weapon. Just him. And a very angry alien monster.

Suddenly, a series of high-pitched WHISTLES cuts through the air. From the shadows of another rocky outcrop, figures emerge. They are smaller, more

agile versions of the larger creatures, but they move with a coordinated, almost intelligent precision. They are armed with crude, energy-based spears, their tips glowing with a faint, blue light.

OFFICER 3

More of them! And they're armed!

These new creatures, however, don't attack the security officers. They attack the larger, reptilian beasts. They move with lightning speed, jabbing their energy spears into the weak points of the larger creatures, making them shriek in pain.

THE DOCTOR

Local inhabitants! They're fighting the larger creatures! A territorial dispute! Or perhaps... they recognize the TARDIS!

One of the smaller creatures, its head adorned with strange, feathered ornaments, approaches the Doctor. It makes a series of clicks and whistles, its glowing blue eyes studying him with an intense curiosity.

THE DOCTOR

Hello there! Don't suppose you speak English, do you? Or Gallifreyan? Bit of a long shot, I know. My name's the Doctor. And this is my... my friend's big blue box. And those chaps are trying to get to it. And I'm a bit... incapacitated.

The creature tilts its head, then clicks and whistles again. It points one of its energy spears at the larger creature that attacked the Doctor, then at the Doctor, then at the TARDIS.

THE DOCTOR

Ah! You're helping me! You're protecting the TARDIS! Brilliant! What a clever bunch you are! And what a remarkably convenient turn of events!

The battle rages around them. The smaller, agile creatures, though outnumbered, are proving to be surprisingly effective, their energy spears finding the weak spots in the larger beasts' armor.

Kankri, meanwhile, has made progress. The TARDIS shimmers more violently, the temporal distortion around it intensifying.

KANKRI

Almost there! The harmonic resonance is almost perfectly aligned! Just a few more... cycles!

The Doctor, seeing Kankri's progress, turns his attention back to the fight. He spots his sonic screwdriver lying near a rock. He makes a dash for it, dodging a swipe from a larger creature. He snatches it up, then turns, a new plan forming in his mind.

He aims the sonic screwdriver at the ground, not to cause a tremor, but to amplify the natural resonance of the planetary body. The ground begins to hum, a deep, resonant vibration that seems to travel through the very rock.

The larger creatures, already disoriented by the smaller ones, begin to writhe in discomfort. The sound seems to physically pain them, disrupting their internal bio-rhythms. They stumble, their movements becoming sluggish.

The smaller creatures, however, seem unaffected. They redouble their efforts, driving the larger creatures back, forcing them to retreat into the shadows.

KANKRI

The temporal seal is breaking! The TARDIS is almost accessible!

With a final, resounding CLANG, the TARDIS door pops open, revealing the familiar, impossibly vast interior. The comforting hum of its engines fills the air.

THE DOCTOR

Yes! She's back! My beautiful girl! Kankri, get in! Everyone, into the TARDIS! Quickly!

Kankri wastes no time. He leaps into the TARDIS, a look of profound relief on his face. The Doctor, however, pauses. He looks at the smaller, indigenous creatures, who are now standing guard around the TARDIS, their energy spears still glowing.

THE DOCTOR

Thank you. All of you. You saved my TARDIS. And me. I owe you one.

He bows, a gesture of respect. The lead creature clicks and whistles, then bows in return.

The Doctor turns and rushes into the TARDIS, the familiar blue doors closing behind him with a satisfying THUD.

INT. TARDIS - CONSOLE ROOM - CONTINUOUS

The console room is a chaotic but comforting mess of levers, buttons, and blinking lights. Kankri stands, wide-eyed, taking it all in. The sheer impossibility of the space, the intricate beauty of the console.

KANKRI

It's... it's larger on the inside. And the aesthetic is... surprisingly organic. And remarkably inefficient in terms of spatial utilization. However, the temporal displacement unit appears to be functioning within optimal parameters.

The Doctor grins, practically skipping to the console.

THE DOCTOR

I know, right?! Isn't she glorious?! And you, my friend, are the first person to ever complain about the spatial utilization of a TARDIS! You're going to fit right in!

He pulls a lever, then presses a button. The TARDIS shudders, then whirs, its engines groaning with a familiar, comforting sound. The viewscreen above the console shows the alien landscape outside, then blurs, then dissolves into the swirling vortex of time and space.

THE DOCTOR

Right! First things first! We need to get you back to your own timeline, Kankri! Or at least, find a suitable, non-collapsing alternative. Unless you fancy a bit of an adventure? See the universe? All of it?

Kankri looks at the Doctor, then at the swirling vortex on the viewscreen. He thinks of the island, of Gamzee, of Finn. He thinks of the sheer, terrifying beauty of the universe, and the endless possibilities it holds.

KANKRI

My timeline, while undoubtedly in need of... intervention, can perhaps wait. The opportunity to observe and analyze the intricacies of the cosmos,

under the tutelage of a seasoned temporal operative, is an educational prospect of unparalleled magnitude.

The Doctor grins, a triumphant, joyous expression.

THE DOCTOR

Brilliant! I knew you had it in you! Right then! Allons-y! To adventure! And probably more tea!

He pulls another lever, and the TARDIS lurches, then settles into a steady, rhythmic hum, hurtling through the vortex. Kankri, holding onto a console railing, feels a thrill unlike anything he's ever experienced. His journey, it seemed, had only just begun.

FADE TO BLACK.

CHAPTER 9

INT. TARDIS - CONSOLE ROOM - VARIOUS LOCATIONS AND TIMES

SOUND of the TARDIS humming, whirring, occasional clanks and groans

The TARDIS console room, a familiar haven of organized chaos, is now Kankri’s temporary home. Weeks, perhaps months, have blurred into an exhilarating, bewildering odyssey through time and space. The Doctor, a whirlwind of boundless energy and brilliant, often baffling, logic, drags Kankri from one impossible scenario to the next.

One moment, they’re observing the birth of a star, its fiery gases swirling into existence, filling the viewscreen with an unimaginable light. The next, they’re mediating a diplomatic crisis between sentient fungal colonies and a race of crystalline beings on a planet where the very air hums with telepathic static.

KANKRI, initially overwhelmed, has slowly begun to adapt. His analytical mind, once confined to the rigid structures of his own timeline, now stretches to encompass the infinite absurdities and wonders of the universe. He still meticulously documents everything in his salvaged notepad, his observations growing ever more esoteric and profound.

KANKRI

(Observing a nebula on the viewscreen)

The chromatic variations within this stellar nursery are truly breathtaking. The emission spectra suggest a high concentration of ionized hydrogen and oxygen, indicative of active star formation. However, the anomalous gravitational lensing implies a localized dark matter density exceeding theoretical models.

THE DOCTOR, tinkering with a complex circuit board, glances up, a proud smile on his face.

THE DOCTOR

See? I told you you’d get the hang of it! You’re practically a stellar cartographer already! Though I think ‘breathtaking’ is a rather unscientific term, wouldn’t you agree?

KANKRI

(Adjusting his glasses)

Indeed. A subjective descriptor. However, the emotional response elicited by such a magnificent cosmic phenomenon is an undeniable aspect

of the observational experience. To disregard it would be to deny a fundamental component of sentient perception.

THE DOCTOR

(Chuckles)

Oh, you’re definitely getting the hang of it! Right, then! Next stop: the library of Xylos! I hear they have a rather excellent collection of interdimensional poetry. And possibly a decent cup of tea.

The TARDIS lurches, then the familiar wheezing, groaning sound of materialization fills the console room. The viewscreen shifts to show a massive, impossibly tall structure, gleaming silver against a sky of swirling magenta and emerald.

INT. LIBRARY OF XYLOS - DAY (ALIEN)

The library is not a building, but a living, breathing entity. Its 'shelves' are crystalline vines that grow upwards into the magenta sky, each 'book' a glowing, pulsating orb embedded within the living architecture. Sentient beings of all shapes and sizes, some floating, some slithering, some with multiple limbs, move through the corridors of light, absorbing knowledge directly through touch or resonant frequency.

Kankri is utterly captivated.

KANKRI

This is... beyond remarkable. A truly organic information repository! The direct neural interface with the data stream, the communal knowledge assimilation... the efficiency is unparalleled!

THE DOCTOR

Isn’t it though? Though I do miss the smell of old paper. And the satisfying *thunk* of a well-bound tome. Still, can’t argue with progress. Now, I’m looking for something specific. A rather obscure text on the migratory patterns of the lesser-known chronovores.

They spend hours in the library, Kankri absorbing information like a sponge, the Doctor flitting from one section to another, occasionally pausing to engage in a lively debate with a floating, multi-eyed librarian.

As they are about to leave, the Doctor notices Kankri engrossed in a particularly vibrant, pulsing orb.

THE DOCTOR

Found something interesting, Kankri?

KANKRI

(His voice hushed)

Doctor, this orb... it contains the complete historical archive of a civilization that achieved perfect societal harmony. No conflict, no scarcity, no prejudice. For ten thousand years.

The Doctor raises an eyebrow, intrigued.

THE DOCTOR

Really? Perfect harmony? That’s a tall order. What happened to them?

Kankri pulls away from the orb, a look of profound sadness on his face.

KANKRI

They... they simply ceased to exist. They achieved everything, solved every problem, reached a state of complete stasis. And then, one day, they simply faded away. No wars, no plagues, no natural disasters. Just... entropy. A complete lack of drive, of purpose.

The Doctor nods slowly, a thoughtful expression on his face.

THE DOCTOR

Fascinating. And rather sad. A universe without conflict, without struggle... it’s a universe that stops evolving. Stops living, in a way. Even the stars die, eventually.

KANKRI

It is a sobering lesson. The necessity of imperfection. The drive that arises from challenge. Perhaps... perhaps even the necessity of certain forms of... aggression.

He thinks of Gamzee, of the island, of the parasitic entity. The Doctor notices the shift in Kankri’s demeanor.

THE DOCTOR

Thinking of Gamzee, are we?

KANKRI

His... unconventional methods. His embrace of the primal. Perhaps there was a wisdom in it, a necessary component for the continued vibrancy of a species. Though I still maintain my objections to unnecessary brutality.

THE DOCTOR

It’s a fine line, Kankri. A very fine line. And one we all walk, in our own ways.

INT. TARDIS - CONSOLE ROOM - LATER

The TARDIS is hurtling through another star-streaked vortex. Kankri is at the console, charting a course, his movements more confident now.

KANKRI

Doctor, I have identified a series of temporal anomalies. They appear to be converging on a specific point in spacetime. A nexus. The probability of the TARDIS being drawn to such a location is statistically significant.

THE DOCTOR

A nexus, you say? Interesting! What kind of nexus? A temporal crossroads? A pocket universe? Or perhaps... a particularly strong cup of tea?

KANKRI

The energy signatures are... chaotic. Fluctuating between multiple dimensional planes. It suggests a confluence of disparate realities.

The Doctor's eyes widen.

THE DOCTOR

Disparate realities! Kankri, you brilliant, brilliant troll! That’s it! That’s why the TARDIS brought us to that island! It wasn’t just a random crash! It was a point of convergence! A weakness in the fabric of spacetime!

He rushes to the console, punching in new coordinates.

THE DOCTOR

She always takes me where I need to be! And she needed me to fix that tear! To stabilize the energies! To stop the chaos from spreading!

Kankri’s eyes narrow, a new understanding dawning.

KANKRI

So the parasitic entity, the Mother crystal, the unusual flora and fauna... they were all symptoms of a localized dimensional bleed-through? A breakdown in the barriers between realities?

THE DOCTOR

Precisely! The island was being invaded! Not by a conventional force, but by something far more insidious! Something from *outside*! And Gamzee, with his unique physiology, his connection to the Mother... he was the key! He was the bridge!

The Doctor begins to pace, his mind racing.

THE DOCTOR

And now, the TARDIS is leading us to another such nexus! A place where realities are colliding! And if we don't fix it... well, the consequences could be rather dire. Universal collapse, perhaps. Or just a really bad hair day for everyone.

The TARDIS gives a violent SHUDDER. Alarms blare. The viewscreen flashes red.

KANKRI

Doctor! We are experiencing extreme temporal turbulence! The dimensional barriers are destabilizing!

THE DOCTOR

Hold on, Kankri! This is going to be a bumpy ride!

The TARDIS lurches again, violently, throwing them both against the console. Sparks fly. The lights flicker. The sound of rending metal fills the air.

INT. TARDIS - CONSOLE ROOM - CRASHED

SOUND of groaning metal, a high-pitched whine, distant, unfamiliar sounds

The TARDIS lies on its side, groaning softly. The console is smashed, sparks still occasionally flying from exposed wires. The lights are dim, flickering weakly. The viewscreen is shattered, showing only static.

Kankri, bruised and disoriented, pulls himself up. He checks the Doctor, who is slumped against the console, a trickle of blood running from his temple.

KANKRI

Doctor! Are you responsive? Your vital signs appear to be... compromised!

The Doctor groans, slowly opening his eyes. He blinks, then looks around the damaged console room.

THE DOCTOR

Oof. That was... a bit more than bumpy. Where are we?

He tries to stand, but his legs give out. Kankri helps him up.

THE DOCTOR

She’s badly hurt. The TARDIS. Never seen her quite like this. What happened?

KANKRI

The temporal nexus. It appears to have been far more volatile than anticipated. We have been forcibly ejected. And the external energy readings are... unprecedented.

They struggle to the main doors. The Doctor pushes them open, revealing not a familiar landscape, but a chaotic, impossible vista.

EXT. CONVERGENCE POINT - DAY (IMPOSSIBLE REALITY)

The sky above them is a kaleidoscope of clashing colors, bleeding into each other like spilled paint. Three suns, each a different hue – emerald, violet, and crimson – hang suspended in the impossible heavens. The ground beneath their feet is a patchwork of shifting landscapes: a desert of shimmering glass, a forest of colossal, bioluminescent fungi, a sea of churning, iridescent liquid. Buildings from various architectural styles, some futuristic, some ancient, some utterly alien, jut into the sky, half-formed, half-dissolving.

The air is thick with a cacophony of sounds: distant roars, melodic chimes, the whisper of wind through non-existent trees, the echo of forgotten languages. The very fabric of reality here is unstable, constantly shifting, shimmering.

KANKRI

(Voice awed)

This is... a dimensional confluence. A point where multiple realities have intersected and are actively merging. The theoretical implications are... mind-boggling.

THE DOCTOR

(His eyes wide with a mixture of horror and wonder)

It’s worse than I thought. Much worse. This isn’t just a bleed-through. This is a full-blown dimensional collapse. And the TARDIS... she tried to stabilize it. Tried to heal it. But she couldn’t. Not alone.

He looks at the shattered console, then at the impossible landscape.

THE DOCTOR

This is why she brought us here. This is the biggest tear in the fabric of reality. And if we don't fix it... the whole universe could unravel.

Suddenly, a massive, shadowy form detaches itself from the swirling chaos in the sky. It's colossal, amorphous, constantly shifting its shape, a being made of pure, raw, chaotic energy. It radiates an oppressive aura of malevolence, of hunger.

KANKRI

That is... an entity of unimaginable power. Its energy signature dwarfs anything we have previously encountered.

THE DOCTOR

That’s what’s causing all this. It’s feeding. Feeding on the collapsing realities. And it’s growing stronger.

The entity turns its attention to them, its form coalescing into something vaguely humanoid, but with multiple, glowing eyes and long, tendril-like limbs that lash out, tearing at the fabric of the merging realities.

THE DOCTOR

Right. Plan Z, then. Or is it Omega? Never mind. The point is, we need to stop it. And we need to fix this. Before everything... ends.

He turns to Kankri, his face grim, but a spark of defiant determination in his eyes.

THE DOCTOR

Kankri, I need your brain. I need you to calculate. To find a way to stabilize these realities. To find a counter-frequency. To find a way to push it back.

KANKRI

But the TARDIS is damaged! And my tools are rudimentary! The scale of this problem is... immense!

THE DOCTOR

I know! But you’re Kankri! You’re brilliant! You found a way to recalibrate the TARDIS beacon with a plasma wrench! You helped save an entire island from a parasitic entity! You can do this! We have to do this!

He looks at the approaching entity, its tendrils reaching out, tearing at the very ground beneath their feet.

THE DOCTOR

I’ll buy you time. Just... find a way.

He pulls out his sonic screwdriver, which, miraculously, seems to be working, albeit with a faint tremor. He points it at the entity, a defiant challenge in his gaze.

THE DOCTOR

Oi! You big, nasty, reality-eating blob! You leave my universe alone!

The entity lets out a deafening ROAR, its tendrils lashing out, creating localized explosions of clashing realities. The ground beneath them cracks and shimmers.

Kankri, despite his fear, takes a deep breath. He looks at the Doctor, then at the impossible chaos around them. He closes his eyes, his mind already whirring, sifting through every piece of information he has ever absorbed, every theory, every calculation.

He opens his eyes, a fierce determination in their depths.

KANKRI

I have a hypothesis. A highly improbable, extremely dangerous hypothesis. But it might just work.

THE DOCTOR

(Dodging a blast of raw energy)

Improbable and dangerous? Sounds like a Tuesday! What is it?!

KANKRI

We need to reverse the flow. Not just stabilize, but re-segregate. To push the realities back into their proper places. And to do that... we need an anchor. A focal point. A single, consistent reality to re-establish the boundaries.

He looks at the damaged TARDIS, then at the Doctor.

KANKRI

Your TARDIS. It is the most temporally and dimensionally stable object in this entire nexus. It is the only thing that can withstand this chaos. We must use its core. Its heart. As the anchor.

The Doctor stares at him, a dawning realization in his eyes.

THE DOCTOR

The TARDIS core? But that’s... that’s her very soul! It could destroy her! It could destroy us!

KANKRI

It is a calculated risk, Doctor. But if we do nothing, the destruction is assured. This is our only chance.

He rushes back into the damaged TARDIS, his mind alight with a desperate, terrifying plan. The Doctor, with a final, defiant glare at the approaching entity, follows, a grim determination on his face.

The fate of the universe, it seemed, rested on the shoulders of a perpetually anxious troll and a madman in a blue box.

FADE TO BLACK.

CHAPTER 10

INT. TARDIS - CONSOLE ROOM - CRASHED - CONTINUOUS

SOUND of groaning metal, sparking wires, the chaotic roar of collapsing realities outside

The TARDIS interior, already a wreck, groans under the immense pressure of the collapsing realities. Sparks fly from the console, and the lights flicker erratically, casting long, dancing shadows. KANKRI, his face grim but resolute, scrambles over debris, making his way to the heart of the TARDIS: the central column, now pulsating with a frantic, desperate energy.

THE DOCTOR, bruised but undaunted, follows, using his sonic screwdriver to weld shut ruptures in the ship’s internal structure, buying them precious seconds.

THE DOCTOR

Kankri! Are you sure about this? Tapping into the TARDIS’s core… it’s like performing open-heart surgery on a living being! One wrong move, and we could unravel her completely! Or worse, unravel ourselves!

KANKRI

(His voice tight with concentration)

The calculations are precise, Doctor. The TARDIS’s inherent temporal and dimensional stability provides the only suitable anchor point for this level of re-segregation. We must create a localized, inverse temporal

gradient, utilizing the core’s inherent chronal energy to force the converging realities back into their original configurations.

He pulls open a damaged panel on the central column, revealing a pulsating, crystalline matrix beneath. It glows with an ethereal, multi-colored light, the very essence of time and space contained within.

THE DOCTOR

An inverse temporal gradient! Brilliant! And utterly insane! You truly are a marvel, Kankri! But how do we *activate* it? We need a catalyst! A surge!

Kankri connects a series of salvaged wires and conduits from the console to the exposed core, his hands moving with surprising speed and dexterity.

KANKRI

The catalyst must be a focused burst of chronal energy. A temporal shockwave, synchronized with the TARDIS’s own heart. My calculations suggest a direct neural interface, amplified by a localized energy conduit.

He points to a damaged, but still functional, power conduit leading from the main console.

KANKRI

One of us must act as the conduit. To channel the necessary energy.

The Doctor stares at him, a dawning horror in his eyes.

THE DOCTOR

A neural interface? Kankri, that’s… that’s incredibly dangerous! It could burn out your mind! Or worse!

KANKRI

(Meeting his gaze)

The risk is acknowledged. However, my unique physiology, combined with my established, albeit limited, temporal awareness, makes me the most suitable candidate. My psychic resilience, while not as robust as a Time Lord’s, is far superior to any other known species.

He looks at the Doctor, a flicker of something raw and vulnerable in his eyes.

KANKRI

Besides, Doctor. You are the last of your kind. The universe needs you. I am merely… a statistic. A survivor of a timeline already doomed. This is… my purpose.

Before the Doctor can protest, Kankri quickly connects a series of exposed wires to a makeshift headband he fashions from a piece of salvaged metal. He places it on his head, his face a mask of grim determination. He then connects another wire from the headband directly to the exposed core of the TARDIS.

THE DOCTOR

Kankri, no! Wait! There has to be another way!

KANKRI

(His voice strained)

No time, Doctor! The entity outside… it’s growing stronger! I need you to stabilize the main power conduit! Overload it! Give me everything you’ve got!

The TARDIS groans, shuddering violently. The chaotic roars from outside intensify, rattling the very foundations of the ship. The entity is literally tearing at the TARDIS’s exterior.

The Doctor looks at Kankri, then at the pulsating core, then at the main power conduit, sparking wildly. He knows Kankri is right. This is their only chance.

With a heavy heart, he lunges for the power conduit. He grabs a thick, sparking cable, his hands burning. He uses his sonic screwdriver to bypass the safety protocols, overloading the system, sending a massive surge of energy directly into the TARDIS’s core.

The TARDIS screams, a sound of unimaginable power and pain.

Kankri, connected to the core, screams too. His body convulses, his eyes rolling back in his head. The multi-colored light of the core intensifies, pulsing in sync with Kankri’s agony. His skin glows with an eerie, internal light, the energy coursing through him.

KANKRI

(His voice distorted, echoing)

The… the realities… they are… pushing back! So much… chaos! I… I cannot… hold it!

The Doctor watches, helpless, as Kankri writhes, battling the raw forces of dimensional collapse. He can hear the entity outside, roaring in frustration, its tendrils lashing against the TARDIS, trying to break through.

THE DOCTOR

Fight it, Kankri! You’re stronger than this! You saved an island! You saved Gamzee! You can save us all!

Kankri’s body arcs, a blinding flash of multi-colored light erupting from him. The TARDIS shudders, then lets out a triumphant ROAR.

Outside, the chaotic landscape begins to unravel. The clashing realities separate, peeling away from each other like layers of an onion. The impossible sky reforms, the shifting landscapes stabilize, retreating into their own dimensions. The monstrous entity in the sky lets out a final, agonizing SCREECH, its form dissolving into nothingness as its food source vanishes.

The TARDIS settles, its groaning subsiding. The lights inside stabilize, casting a steady, warm glow. The central column’s light softens, returning to its normal, rhythmic pulse.

Kankri collapses, the headband falling from his head. He lies motionless, his body still glowing faintly, his breathing shallow.

The Doctor rushes to his side, tearing off the power cable from the conduit, his hands shaking. He checks Kankri’s pulse. It’s faint, but there.

THE DOCTOR

Kankri? Kankri, can you hear me?

Kankri’s eyes flutter open. They are wide, and filled with an ancient, terrifying wisdom. He looks at the Doctor, then at the console room, then at his own hands.

KANKRI

(His voice weak, but clear)

It is done, Doctor. The realities are re-segregated. The nexus is closed.

He tries to sit up, but his strength fails him.

KANKRI

I… I saw it all. The infinite possibilities. The endless versions of everything. And… and the cost. The terrible, beautiful cost of existence.

He smiles, a soft, ethereal smile that the Doctor has never seen before.

KANKRI

It was… glorious.

His eyes close. His body stops glowing. His breathing stops.

THE DOCTOR

Kankri? Kankri! No!

The Doctor cradles Kankri’s lifeless body, his heart aching with a profound, unbearable grief. He has lost so many. But Kankri… Kankri was different. Kankri was just beginning to truly live.

He sits there for a long time, the silence of the TARDIS a heavy shroud around them.

Eventually, the Doctor rises. His face is etched with sorrow, but also with a fierce, quiet resolve. He gently lays Kankri’s body on the floor, covering him with his own tweed jacket.

He walks to the console, his hands hovering over the controls. The TARDIS, sensing his grief, hums softly, mournfully.

THE DOCTOR

She’s gone, old girl. He saved us. He saved everything.

He takes a deep breath, then presses a button. The viewscreen flickers, showing the outside. The impossible landscape is gone, replaced by a swirling vortex of stars and galaxies. The TARDIS is free.

THE DOCTOR

Right. Where to now? Somewhere quiet. Somewhere… to remember.

He sets a course, not for Earth, not for any familiar planet, but for a distant, uncharted nebula, a place of silent, cosmic beauty. The TARDIS dematerializes with a soft, gentle hum, carrying its two occupants – one living, one forever silent – into the endless void.

INT. TARDIS - CONSOLE ROOM - LATER

The TARDIS is parked in the heart of a shimmering nebula, its colors – blues, purples, greens – painting the console room in a gentle, ethereal light. The Doctor sits by Kankri’s body, a quiet vigil.

He pulls out Kankri’s salvaged notepad. He opens it, flipping through the pages. Kankri’s meticulous notes, his scientific observations, his philosophical musings. And then, at the very end, a single, new entry, written in a shaky hand, after their encounter with the Mother crystal:

*“The universe is not merely a collection of data points to be analyzed. It is a symphony of experiences, a tapestry woven with joy and sorrow, conflict and

harmony. And sometimes, the most profound truths are found not in the grand theories, but in the simple act of choosing to help, to connect, to belong. Even if for a fleeting moment."*

The Doctor closes the notepad, a single tear tracing a path down his cheek.

He looks at Kankri's peaceful face, then at the shimmering nebula outside. He thinks of Finn, safe in his own reality, growing into a hero. He thinks of Gamzee, guardian of an island, finding his own twisted form of peace. And he thinks of Kankri, who found his purpose, his belonging, in the most unlikely of adventures.

He stands, a new resolve hardening his gaze. Kankri wouldn't want him to wallow. Kankri would want him to understand. To explore. To protect.

He walks to the console, his hand resting on its smooth surface.

THE DOCTOR

Alright, old girl. Let's go. There's a whole universe out there. And it needs us. It needs… compassion. And maybe, just maybe, a little bit of the wisdom Kankri left behind.

The TARDIS hums in agreement. The viewscreen shows the nebula, then the swirling vortex of time and space. The Doctor pulls a lever, and the TARDIS dematerializes, leaving the silent nebula behind, carrying the legacy of a small, anxious troll who found his courage, his purpose, and ultimately, his peace, amongst the stars.

The journey continues. The universe waits.

FADE TO BLACK.